

Prologue

On a perfectly good summer day a car with 4 people inside sped along the empty driveways towards Surrey from Kings Cross Station in London. The people inside were Mr. Vernon Dursley - a large, beefy man with no neck, his wife Petunia – a slim woman with a neck like a giraffe and blond hair, their son Dudley – a blond boy the age of 15 and the size of a small killerwhale and lastly Harry Potter, Mrs. Dursleys nephew. Harry was also 15 years old, but that was the only thing he had in common with the rest of this family. He was a small, black haired boy with a waif-like appearance and startling emerald green eyes that were hidden behind glasses with a thick, black plastic frame.

While the Dursleys were a perfectly normal family, Harry was by no means normal. He was a wizard and as such despised by his family, who were more than weary of anything they viewed as abnormal and freaky. But – to Harrys chagrin – he was not a normal wizard either... well if there was such a thing as a normal wizard. He was known to other wizards as the Boy-who-lived and marked with a scar on his forehead in the form of a lightningbolt. Said scar was the only reminder of the reason Harry did not live with his parents as other children do: it was simply because he had no parents. His parents – a witch and a wizard - died the same day he received his scar: on the night of Halloween after Harrys first birthday they were killed by an evil wizard by the name of Voldemort. And while his parents fell prey to the supposedly unstoppable killing curse Avada Kedavra, the same curse was reflected back onto the caster by infant-Harry and cost Voldemort his body. Mind, the reflected curse didn't kill him, but made him into a spirit-like thing because of all the rituals Voldemort had conducted upon himself in search for immortality.

Those events and a couple of others led to the fact that Harry was left on his relatives doorstep in the middle of the night by Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Head of the Order of the Phoenix and fighter for the light

extraordinaire, with the intention for Harry to grow up normally and without being privy to his fame. To say that the Dursleys were not pleased upon learning that their freak of a nephew was dumped on them would be an understatement. So naturally they took their bad luck out on the only available freaky person – Harry. Which in turn led to him growing up as a personal servant for the Dursleys, sleeping in the cupboard under the stairs while his cousin had two rooms – as well as being generally unloved and unwanted.

Upon discovering the Wizarding World at age eleven however, Harry was sure that for the first time in his life that things were looking up. Being able to be away from his relatives for most of the year, maybe being able to make friends without them being bullied away by Dudley, learning more about his parents, learning about being a wizard and beginning a whole new life: that sounded like a fabulous fairytale to him. But Harry soon had to discover that fairytales aren't real. Each year he was shipped off to his relatives again in the summer holidays, people flocked to him because of his fame – not because they liked him as a person, his parents were only ever mentioned to say "You are a carbon copy of your father, but you have your mother's eyes." which didn't have much of a meaning at all, being magical wasn't what it was made out to be - especially if you couldn't practice in the holidays because of a stupid ministry law and being the Boy-who-lived forced an image onto him that just didn't match his personality and life so far.

Now, at nearly sixteen years of age he had had numerous attempts on his life by Voldemort while he was supposedly safe at school, had been ridiculed, slandered, ignored and praised whenever the wizarding populace felt like it. He had been abandoned by his friends, had been lied to and misled by his headmaster and had been put down repeatedly by Snape and just this year by that toad Umbridge. Then his godfather Sirius Black had fallen through the veil in the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic at the end of his last school-year. And to top it all off, the headmaster had decided, that now of all times was the right moment to tell him of the prophecy. As

if he hadn't had enough on his shoulders already. Not to mention being sent back into isolation to his muggle-relatives, cut off from his friends and any hint of the magical world.

At the moment though, Harry was lost in feelings of guilt, depression and self-pity rather than the impressive anger he used to wreck Dumbledores office or the icy determination to finally live his own life instead of being other peoples puppet that had gripped him on his last days in Hogwarts. He didn't react to the beautiful weather, to the fact that they had already reached Privet Drive or the fact that his Uncles face darkened in color by the second at his inattentiveness.

"POTTER! Get your ass out of my car and into the house."

The bellow his Uncle let loose managed to shake Harry out of his stupor and he jumped out of the car, ran to the boot and began to heave his trunk out of it, to lug it into the house. Surprisingly enough his Uncle held the door open for him and shut it with a bang after him.

"Boy, leave your trunk here and come with me, we have something to discuss," his Uncle said in a low tone, another thing not exactly normal in Vernon Dursleys behavior when it concerned his nephew. Especially after the episode at the station where the Order had threatened the Dursleys. As Harry looked up and around he found the entirety of the house in his range of vision devoid of any furniture and décor. Wondering what happened he followed his Uncle into the livingroom where his Aunt waited for them, sitting on a large suitcase. Dudley had already disappeared upstairs.

"There are several things you should know, boy," began his Aunt with disdain. "A few days ago your headmaster send us a letter, concerning the happenings in your freaky world and things he said we should not let you do over the holidays. Like leaving the house to go shopping or to the park or even working in the yard among other things. Things that would have conflicted with your chores. And the little fact that he wanted you to stay here until September."

Seeing Harry's shocked expression his Uncle continued where his Aunt left off: "What alarmed us though, apart from you staying for more than two months, was the fact that he would send you here when you were in even more extreme danger than you were the last year with those dementi-things, because it meant we were also in danger of being visited by some deranged murderer or worse: killed. So we decided to write that insane man back despite our dislike for your kind and demand an answer as to why exactly we were endangered when his freak-stuff should keep you safe. Imagine our surprise when we got a letter back with several rolls of that outdated paper-like stuff your people use, which explained in detail that there were loads of m-ma-magical barriers around the house and that your Aunt living here kept you - and us – supposedly safe."

"After I read through all the material that was sent to us, I tried to make heads and tails of it and stumbled, while rereading it, upon a very interesting fact: those blood protection wards, as he called them, need my presence and your presence in the place you call home for exactly 1 month out of the year to remain intact. Not necessarily my home and not necessarily at the same time. The protection is also around my home and family as long as the wards around your home are intact. Mind you, I got the feeling that he didn't mean to send all the information along with that burning bird." Petunia Dursley sighed deeply. "We decided, of course, to leave on a 2 month vacation and you here with list of chores, asking Mrs. Figg to look after you occasionally. But before we could book said vacation, something happened. Vernon was approached by his boss at Grunnings and asked if he wanted to have a leading position in one of the branches they are opening up abroad."

"It was a miracle that it happened right at this time. So we decided, as we had long since wanted a holiday home in a warmer climate that we could just as well move into said climate year-round and I accepted a position on an island in the Caribbean. Sunny weather, agreeable temperature, good business and low prices, as well as a

good education in private schools for Dudley. Moving away from a threat like this Volshie-guy was a good thing, too. That was however only possible because of our savings and a healthy amount of money from Grunnings." Vernon wandered into the kitchen to get something to drink for himself and his wife.

"Because we did not want you to come with us, making problems and endangering us and Diddydums, we decided to let you live here for the rest of the summer, leaving those obscure protections intact and us safe. Then we wanted to sell the house when you were back in school. Next year you would have either not needed to have those protections and so wouldn't we or you would have searched for a new home, where we could have re-established the protection under the guise of visiting Marge and staying there or something like that, so that we remained under it and out of danger as well."

Vernon started talking again as soon as he re-entered the livingroom, while handing his wife a glass of iced tea.

"But we received some... well... interesting news concerning this house. Petunia inherited the house from her parents or so we thought, but in the end when we found the deed for the property, it stated that her sister had been the one to purchase and own it, letting their parents and later us live in it. Therefore this house is yours, since your mother is dead. We also found out, that the only reason we never had to pay rent for it, was the fact that you were sent to live with us. The taxes were paid out of a trust fund designed solely for paying those - and other bills if you ever lived alone in this house without us. It was a great shock for us, because it meant in essence that you were the sole reason why we could afford the living style we had and buy a house in the Caribbean instead of renting an apartment."

To say that Harry was shocked would have been the understatement of the year. His mouth hung wide open and his eyes threatened to fall out of his head, all thoughts about Sirius and the veil forgotten.

"You mean to tell me," he asked after he had successfully closed his mouth, "that all this time I could have been living with somebody else, Aunt Petunia could have visited for 4 weeks every year and there was absolutely no reason for Dumbledore to force us together like this?"

His voice had gotten shriller and louder continuously while he spoke. Harry's Uncle continued to sip his tea as his Aunt simply nodded her head.

Harry felt all kinds of emotions and memories run through his mind. Being locked in his cupboard, being told that he was an ungrateful freak, getting hand-me-down clothes, being told he grew up with muggles because of his fame, Dumbledore telling him he had to stay at his Aunts because of the protection, Dumbledore forbidding him from leaving Privet Drive. An overwhelming anger grew larger and larger within him and he had to sit down. Trying to get himself under control again, he leant against the wall and looked up at his Aunt and Uncle.

"Is there more?"

"Yes."

"What else?"

"The fact that the protections would have been stronger all along, had it been done the way you described. Their strength seems to be based on the strength of love felt in and for the home, which includes the people. Our hatred for you diminished the wards to almost nothing. The result were those Dementi-things last summer. Had the wards been at their full strength, they couldn't even have come near the outer limits. Then there is the fact that the lawyer we contacted because of the deed, the one that told us of the trust fund, told us that he was a squid?"

She looked questioningly at Harry, who shook his head and said "Squib. A person born into a magical family but without magic. It's the opposite of what Mom was – a witch born into a non-magical family." His Aunt nodded and continued, not even mentioning his triple use of the m-word.

"He told us also of your parents will in which they stated that in case something happened to them you should be left either with your godfather or your godmother or if both were unavailable with a family named Longbottom, but under absolutely no circumstances with us, because of our negative opinion of magic."

"Then why did Dumbledore leave me here?" Harry fell silent again when his Aunt shot him a glare.

"Thirdly the fact that we and you should have received several things in case Dumbledore managed to circumvent their will, which we did – but the things were tampered with so that we never even looked at them and yours are in the attic together with some things your mother left here, because she didn't want them found. The lawyer had someone take a look at the wards and she said there was one made by the caster to put something called a Notice-me-not charm on everything even remotely of magical origin. That includes the information of the trust fund, everything they sent to us, the things your mother left and interestingly enough: you."

"What?" The screech left Harry mouth unbidden. "But that... I don't understand." He mumbled silently for a while and continued aloud: "In retrospect it makes a lot of sense. I suppose she broke that particular aspect of the wards?"

His Uncle looked shrewdly at him, but nodded slowly. "Yes, she did. The charm had been weakened over the passage of time, include to that the already weak wards and you can imagine just why magical things have been noticed more and more around here. But she

couldn't tell us if it was done intentional or simply botched up and meant for outside person not to notice anything unusual. How did you know? Well you can tell us later, there are some things left and we need to get to London to catch our plane." Vernon took out a handkerchief and dried the sweat that had collected on his forehead.

"Now, the lawyer, when told of our plans, said that we couldn't simply leave a minor like you here in England without attendance when we moved. We would get fined and worse if we even tried that. Additionally they would put you in an orphanage for the time being and than our protection would be null and void because of you not being here and those freaks would know as well. As we couldn't have that, we had him draw up emancipation papers and bring them before a family court. With you being almost sixteen, owning the house and having it and your expenses paid for automatically by the trust fund, as well as going to boarding school as stated in your parents will – having your complete tuition already paid for and the assistance of the lawyer should you need it, your emancipation was passed without a single problem. You only have to sign them."

Harrys Uncle had to repress a shudder before he could continue speaking. "Mr. Stanton also told us that for someone like you or your mother with a legitimate ID in the normal world those papers are legitimate in your freaky world as well. As soon as you sign them your are a legal adult and can get a driving license and do your freak stuff without repercussions. They are confidential, nobody apart from the absolutely necessary people will be informed, as there is something called a secrecy charm on them. The papers are in the kitchen on the counter with our new address and Mr. Stanton's address. When you sign them they will be transported to Mr. Stanton automatically. We sold most of the furniture because we needed money for new things and moving them would have cost a pretty penny, but we left you a percentage in cash to buy new things to your liking. There are some things in the attic and basement you might want and we left you everything Dudley broke or didn't want. Keep them, sell them or throw them away, we don't care. Is there anything

else that can not be handled per e-mail, letter or telephone? We need to get going because else we might miss our flight."

Harry had to shake himself out of his stupor, he couldn't deal with everything as fast as his Uncle had thrown it at him. There was not much he could think about right then, but one thing niggled through to the forefront of his mind. Weird as it was, his relatives had done him a huge favor by moving away and getting him emancipated instead of leaving him with a babysitter for the whole summer.

"Only one thing, Uncle Vernon. There are some kind of wards that keep non-magical people from stumbling upon magical ones. I know for a fact that the opposite is possible as well. If I were to charm something to put up that kind of wards around your new home and send it to you, would you accept it?"

As his Uncle only threw him a stunned look, it was his Aunt who answered: "Yes, we would. But why would you want to do something like that for us, with the way we treated you ? I thought you would rather curse us than help us?"

Harry stared at ground while answered, not looking them in the eyes. "Well, it is just... all these years... as bad as you treated me... I didn't have to live on the streets. And just now you managed to cut the strings by which I was played since I was left with you, as well as your own. I want to repay you for that and as you don't like my kind.... There is the added bonus that with that kind of ward not even Albus Dumbledore will be able to find you and therefore can not try to control either of us again. Some of your behavior can also be traced back to that thrice damned charm, because I do not think, that you would normally treat a child like you did me – magical or not."

"You just might be right about that point. So, you get something out of that as well, heh? Be that as it may, we would appreciate it. Send it along, the normal way, please, will you? Good bye, Harry, I wish you a good summer. I will contact you about visiting here for the wards."

Oh, and the information on those is also on the kitchen counter."

And with those last words his Aunt called for Dudley and his Uncle took the three suitcases and the whole Dursley family left their previous home behind for warmer climates and a hopefully much more normal life, leaving a still mystified Harry on the floor in the livingroom, slumped against the wall, emotions once again running amok.

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Chapter 1

The first thing he noticed was the silence. Complete and utter silence. Something that for some reason irked him to no end. As if that silence was something that did not belong to... where ever he was. Had never resided in this place before or at least not like this. Then, ever so slowly, his other senses came back to him. Smell was first. It smelled... clean. So clean in fact, that there was absolutely no dust tickling his nose and the only other thing seemed to be a light citrus scent wafting in the warm air. Next came touch. Warm air, flowing around him like a lover's touch. That couldn't be right – or could it? Never had a breeze done that to him before, he was somehow sure of it. It indicated an open space, though. Or at least an open window.

'But if there was an open window, wouldn't I hear something, like, children playing? And in an open space in nature this quiet, wouldn't there at least be some rustling leaves or chirping birds?' he marvelled. 'Well, only one way to find out. I will have to look, won't I?'

Darkness. No light to be seen anywhere. Apart from the strange, reddish glow.

'Oh! Note to self: need to open eyes before trying to see next time, could be useful and spare me another almost heart attack. Oh well... .'

There. A huge room completely empty, no furniture, no trinkets, not even curtains in front of the closed windows. The light that flooded in was tinted pink, courtesy of the sunset. Two doors were leading from the room, one opposite of him and the other right next to him. That explained the breeze. Looking through the doorway, he saw a corridor leading to a small wardrobe beside the front door and a set of stairs leading up to a second floor. And in the middle of entrance area was a big wooden trunk.

A sharp gasp marked the exact moment his memories came back.

Thankful that he had remained sitting, Harry sighed deeply. Somehow he felt a bit out of it, not to mention jelly-legged. How could so many things of so much importance to his life happen in that little amount of time? Normally things like this only happened to him when he was in the wizarding world, not when he was isolated in the muggle world. The simple fact that he had been practically knocked out because of the emotional chaos he was in had him shivering.

After deciding not to think too much about it for the moment, Harry settled on his course of action: first he would look around the house to evaluate just what his relatives had left him and what he needed to purchase, then he would look through those papers and sign the emancipation ones, secure in the knowledge that Dumbledore wouldn't know about them and his relatives leaving, due to the fact that the order guard would only be up around now. Before it was only Mrs. Figg making sure that he arrived safe and sound from Kings Cross. He overheard Dumbledore telling her about an indicator-stone that was charmed to give of an alarm if his presence was not noticed inside the wards. She wouldn't have watched long enough to actually notice they had gone. After that he would compose some lists for his coming purchases and the remodeling he wanted to do around the house, because leaving it as it was now was simply out of question. It reminded him too much of his miserable childhood. And finally he would have to really face the recent events and his emotions concerning them.

Sighing again, Harry slowly tried to stand up and, after some wobbling in place, managed to make his way into the kitchen. Just to be surprised again, as the kitchen remained almost the way he remembered it from last year. The only difference were the missing table and chairs, Dudley's TV wasn't there anymore and – he opened the kitchen cupboards – the dishes and cutlery as well as the cooking utensils were missing. But the fridge, the sink, the stove and oven were still there, for all the good that would do without something to cook or to cook in. It seemed, he would have to make an extended shopping trip for more than just a few groceries - as soon as he had

taken a look at the whole house that is.

He ignored the papers on the counter and walked slowly out of the kitchen and up the stairs. Looking through the rooms he had to fight a snicker when he reached his and Dudley's rooms.

"Left anything Dudley didn't want or had broken at one time or another indeed," he muttered

The rooms were of course devoid of any furniture and looked more like a dump than anything else. Broken game systems, games, a computer, CDs and two TVs sat on the floor accompanied by stacks of books that Dudley had never even looked at and various other things. Still shaking his head in amusement Harry stepped first into the guestroom then the master bedroom, only to find them as empty as the livingroom. The bathroom though was to his delight in the same condition as the kitchen, all facilities usable. Looking up to the hatch that led to the attic he frowned and turned right around walking down to the basement instead. He just wasn't ready for that... yet.

Most of the basement was also empty, but there were two exceptions. One was a new set of a washing machine and dryer, the other a mess of junk that the Dursleys simply hadn't bothered to sort through and throw away.

'No surprise there,' Harry mused idly. 'But why on earth did they leave these machines here. Especially as new as they are? Well, no use thinking about it. I have other things to do.'

Taking one last look around he decided to leave the mess for a later sorting and headed to the kitchen yet again. Sweeping all papers and parchment scrolls up, he relocated to the still light flooded livingroom to read them.

While he was leafing through the emancipation papers he found a small notice with his name on it attached to them, from the lawyer. It

explained in detail why nobody in the magical world would be informed of his emancipation.

'Huh. Interesting. So, documents pertaining muggle info on muggle-borns as well as muggle-raised wizards and witches is magically collected and filed as classified information, as well as being doused with secrecy charms. If a change of status like mine occurs, only the responsible employee of the department for underage magic is informed so that the premature self-destruction of the detection-globe can be observed and confirmed. Instead of it self-destructing at the coming-of-age of the person in question. And as the detection is off, other charms linked to the globe and the individual's magic are equally out of commission so that no other person needs to (or can) be informed as it is obvious, simply because the charms do not interfere any more and don't set the underage-detectors all the shops have off. Well, you have to give them one thing: that is really quite ingenious. Of course it was thought up long before Fudge came into power.'

Standing up, Harry put the papers on the floor next to him and left the room to get his trunk. Searching through it, he pulled a quill and an inkwell out and - after some fiddling - signed the papers with a flourish using his trunk as a desk. Glowing for a moment they vanished into thin air and a moment later a thick folder appeared. Inside he found another message from the lawyer, stating that the folder contained an ID-card, a copy of his parents' will and all information pertaining the assets of the Potter Estate and the investments that had been made.

'Wait a moment. What assets? I already know of my parents' vault, I mean, I've been using it. Or did Dumbledore... Well, no matter, I will know soon just what they all hid from me. Mmmh... Uhuh... WHAT! He will inform the Goblins. But why? Ohhh... Access to the FAMILY VAULT? And the secrecy is still in action. So I can expect an evaluation to be sent to me? Ah, I need to go to Diagon Alley anyways, maybe I can pick it up then. It wouldn't surprise me if

Dumbledore screened my mail.'

Harry skimmed through the folder, then put it aside to read the scrolls on the blood protection wards. Frowning he looked at a small puddle of ink that had dribbled out of his quill onto his trunk.

'I really need to buy some muggle pens. They are easier to write with and they do not leak like these bloody quills. Maybe I could put a charm or two on them... to never run out of ink? You can buy quills with those... I really need to keep my concentration on the matter at hand.'

When he finished the scrolls the sun had fully set and he had switched on the light because it became too dark to read without it. The information he gathered throughout his quest had sent him reeling again. What he himself suspected and his Aunt had confirmed, wasn't even half of it. The fact that he could have lived with just about anybody or even alone he had already known from before. The fact that the wards were diminished by the mutual feelings of hatred he and his relatives shared, as well as his contempt to actually have to be 'home' was also known to him. But the fact that the wards would have been even stronger, if he had been allowed to live with his godfather – or someone approved by Sirius – because of the magical bond between godparent and godchild was entirely new.

Not to speak of the wards that surrounded him wherever he went, centered on his very person – if the wards were strong enough in the first place that is. Or the temporary establishment of another set of blood wards around every place he stayed at for longer than three days for as long as he was there, like Hogwarts. And linked to that the fact that with the wards at full available strength Voldemort wouldn't have been able to come near him or Hogwarts in first, second, fourth and fifth year. Thankfully Voldemort couldn't get through them with the blood they shared due to resurrection ritual, because it was too mixed with Wormtails blood and his own. The

wards would have protected him even from the bastards tries of manipulating and possessing him through his scar.

Looking at all the things he discovered, it almost seemed like Dumbledore had purposely tried to decrease the strength of the wards every possible way short of destroying them. Oh how right he had been, when he told his Aunt that they cut the strings by which his live was directed. Harry felt a fury rise inside like he had never known before. Every single encounter he had had with Voldemort had been utterly unnecessary! His isolation in the muggle world after the Dark Lords downfall and during holidays, not being allowed to Diagon Alley, the Order guards and Occlumency lessons – unnecessary. All the hell he had been through had not only been because of Voldemort, but had been purposely set up by the master puppeteer Dumbledore. He could feel his magic crackling around him, like it had when he destroyed the Headmasters Office.

Thinking of the Order guards again he tried to calm down. It wouldn't do to give them a show and have them report to the old man and have him notice the lack of underage magic warnings. Harry managed to slowly even his breathing out. Getting all riled up over something he could not change wouldn't do him any good. If he managed to stay calm, maybe he could get around the old coot without him noticing. Frowning at the derogatory path his thoughts were taking he finally shrugged.

'Oh well. It's not as if he can hear it now or doesn't deserve it. But he is an expert at Legilimency. I will have to study Occlumency seriously if I want to keep it that way.'

With a deep sigh Harry put the scrolls in his trunk for safekeeping. He had absolutely no intention of letting anybody know of his knowing that information. It would come in handy later, that much he was sure of. The folder and addresses went right along with them. Taking one look through the window he noticed how late it was. All the shops would already be closed and he would have to wait until tomorrow to

buy anything at all. As he hadn't drawn up any of the lists he wanted that was fine with him, but it also meant he would go hungry this evening. Maybe his relatives had left him something edible?

Wandering into the kitchen he switched on the light and headed for the fridge and found to his surprise that it was stocked with milk, orange and apple juice, some cheese, some vegetables and half a loaf of bread. Taking out the bread, cheese and orange juice along with a couple of tomatoes he shut the refrigerator and walked back into the living room, where he stood for moment before he put everything in his trunk. Then he hefted the trunk up and trudged slowly to his room. Leaving the lights on to make the house seem inhabited, he even remembered to switch the ones in Dudley's room on, too.

In his room he had to clear a spot on the floor for his trunk first before he could set it down. Picking the bread and cheese out of his trunk Harry looked around while he ate, categorizing the junk that had been left by the Dursleys and taking a swig of the orange juice occasionally. When he was down in the basement earlier he had seen some folded up cardboard boxes and decided to put the books away in those first. They would be heavy, no doubt, but they would also make a good makeshift bed if he could transfigure something into a mattress. When he was done with that, he'd put everything else in Dudley's room sorting it along the way into rubbish and salvageable things. After all, he could just repara most of it to get a good start on some entertainment electronics and Dudley had broken more than others had to begin with. The waste would be put into bags, to stuff them in the bucket later, and everything else would be packed into boxes too, to be stored away for usage at a later time.

Done eating, Harry fetched the boxes and began gathering all the books and putting them away. The first ten were already in the box when his gaze fell on his wand and he groaned. He could just magic the books into the boxes, he didn't have to do it all by hand. After Tonks had messed the packing charm up last summer, Harry had

gotten interested and looked it up in the library. Learning that this particular charm acted on clearly directed intention he understood why Tonks messed up, as scatterbrained as she oftentimes was. The intention part was the same for all magic, but normally one had a precise incantation to focus that intention and did not have to concentrate so much. The packing charm lacked the precise incantation because there were often many different things to be packed. The incantation acted more like a trigger than anything else. Declaring the charm useful, Harry had tried it until he could do it even without the trigger, only with a flick of his wand he got everything he intended packed up in orderly fashion.

It would be the first magic he did after signing the emancipation papers. Focusing on stacking all the books apart from those in his trunk in the boxes he flicked his wand at the books and they started flying into the boxes one after the other. Harry had even managed to include the books that were still in Dudley's room, they came through the doorway between the two rooms that had been installed because Diddydums doesn't want to go through the corridor to get to his second room and closed up with closets from both sides when Harry got the room. As no more books came, Harry waited until the last book was in a box and ended the charm. Then he waited, staring out of the window. When after 20 minutes still no ministry owl had come, he knew for sure that all had gone well and he now was an adult wizard, able to finally use his magic freely. Fudge would not be able to drag him into another trial for underage use of magic. How someone who was born with magic could be forbidden from actively using it was a mystery to Harry.

'Supervision is understandable, but prohibition?'

Well, no use puzzling over it. It didn't concern him any longer.

Feeling suddenly a tad bit lonely he thought about Hedwig. He had left his trusty owl back at Hogwarts and told her – before boarding the train - to come find him the next day in the evening. It was done

mostly because he had had a weird feeling about bringing her home with his family again, his relatives always had a bad reaction to her – but also because Hedwig despised the train and car rides in her rather narrow cage. She was jostled around quite a bit and bumped into the bars numerous times, causing her to prefer flying above all else. Harry grinned. Hedwig's disgruntled expression on such occasions always extracted a laugh from him, even at the most strenuous of times. He had shrunk her cage and used a charm keyed to a password to be able to resize and re-shrink it again without actively using magic to get around the ban, simply because her cage was unwieldy and in the way if he had to lug around. The whole affair was done easier this way.

Harry had done something else, too, because Hedwig was rather unique in her coloring. He had put a notice-me-not charm on her, making it selective so that the owner and the recipient of a letter were the only ones not affected. It had taken him weeks until he figured out how to do that without causing her harm, but it had also resulted in his trunk and various other pieces of his belongings being charmed that way. At first he had wanted to disillusion her or change her color, but had thought better of it after a little background information. The change in color could easily be permanent and result in his friends being suspicious of an alien owl, and the disillusionment charm was magically draining, as well as being too noticeable to a person with a fine-tuned magical awareness, because of the power behind it, and it was countered in many wards. In the end he had only seen to it that she was not noticed or remembered and put a charm on her that disrupted tracking spells before automatically canceling them a while later. He was rather proud of himself. Of course, that had been in the beginning of the year, before it all went to hell in a hand-basket.

Going back to the boxes he closed several full ones up and labeled them all with the help of his wand. Then he levitated the rest of the items out of his and into Dudley's room, not caring in the least about the additional mess he was creating, even if he was the one who had to look through it later. In the now mostly empty confines of his room

he pushed some of the boxes together to get a platform. Only needing a mattress now, Harry began digging around in his trunk for some of Dudley's oldest hand-me-downs – located at the very bottom of the trunk, throwing some of his textbooks, most of his robes and a few trinkets on the floor beside him. When he finally got a hold of them, he threw them on the makeshift platform changing them into one big piece of cloth first, then transfiguring that into a mattress, something they had learned before they began with animate to inanimate stuff. Other clothes were made into a sheet, a light blanket and pillow. Looking at his new bed, Harry felt proud of himself despite it having no frame. He had managed to get a practical use out of his transfiguration skills.

Not wanting to have to deal with the mess he created not too long ago in the morning, he began picking up his things. He did not want to resort to doing even the tiniest things with his magic like those purebloods did.

'When they don't leave it for the house elves to do, that is.'

Harry grimaced at the thought. He could almost hear Hermione babbling on and on about S.P.E.W., not even considering other people's opinions or stopping. As much as he liked her, some things went too far. He left the other hand-me-downs out for later use and went for the last thing left: a small package of dark fabric. Stumped, he went to collect the strange thing. He only recognized it after picking it up. It was the robe he had worn on the evening of the ministry-disaster, still dirty, torn and bloodied. He started shaking softly, but soon had to sit down because it got worse with every minute.

Until now Harry had carefully distracted himself and avoided the matter altogether. Being reminded of those memories rather abruptly, they overwhelmed him and there was absolutely nothing he could do against it. That he had already been weakened by the emotional rush earlier did nothing to help him, the whole matter was only worsened

because he was totally out of his own control. The memories assaulting him felt like poisonous darts to his already overly tired mind, the overall sensation was more like falling into a chaotic pensieve than viewing a memory normally before his mind's eye. Images and random pieces of his memories continued to literally spin around him in a weird dance as his physical body slumped over in a black out for the second time that day. His mental self however cowered on the floor trying to shield himself from his own memories.

As time went on Harry began to slowly notice that, while the memories were still spinning around him, they had ceased to dive-bomb him at any given opportunity. Uncurling, he stood up. It took a moment to realize his surroundings and another few to finally understand that he stood in his own mind like it was any other room in the house. Just how this feat came to be he didn't know, but right now it did not matter. He felt weird somehow, as if a huge burden had been lifted off of him. Not knowing what better to do, he mustered the courage to ignore the carousel of pictures around him to take stock of the room he was obviously in. It was huge with a vaulted ceiling and a number of doors leading off to who-knows-where. Noticing labels on the doors Harry walked around but had to admit defeat, as he could not read the strange signs they were composed of. Finally daring to take a closer look at his memories, the spinning slowed down to a stop, leaving him surrounded by snap-shots of recent and not-so-recent events.

All of them were only fragments of past happenings which, Harry theorized, he would have to sort through and connect, to get a whole memory.

"No time like the present, huh? I don't ever want to go through that again, so I better deal with it here and now. Maybe... Maybe I will even get a full night's worth of sleep out of it, not being plagued by nightmares and guilt."

But even saying it out loud in the confines of his mind, it sounded

weak and unsure to him. Harry did not want to do this. On the other hand: should something like this happen again and with a little luck in the presence of others or, even better, an Order member he would be totally screwed. And if there were Death Eaters anywhere near him, he would be dead without further notice.

It would be a tedious process, only looking at them made him almost physically ill and he would have to scrutinize every tiny, little bit he came across. Shuddering, he began to look for a starting point, the earliest memory part present. When he found it, Harry was not a happy camper: it was the end of the Third Task, before Cedric and him touched the Cup, more than a year ago. A years worth of the worst memories possible and he would have to confront them. Sure, deep down he knew that he had not dealt with any of it, just pushed it deeper inside with every new event, letting it fester. Which had led to scary nightmares, immeasurable amounts of guilt and, to make matters worse, a rather short temper. He knew without a doubt that he had been destroying himself, but with all the pressure what could and should he have done? His relatives were not even remotely interested, his friends could never understand him and had shut him out before he could try to make them – only to try and pry later on, Dumbledore ignored him, the other teachers left him to fend for himself, Umbridge was part of the problem and Sirius and Remus weren't available.

Sighing, he tried to calculate the amount of time he would need, but came up short. Each and every single one of those memory fragments would affect his emotions something fierce. Harry could already guess, that the perceived time of his mind had nothing to do with the normal concept of time in the physical world. It could be seconds or days before he woke up again and there was nothing he could do about it. Taking another look at his memories, he decided to take as much time as he needed to get the whole mess sorted out. Then he could focus all his thoughts on the future without being held back by a past that he couldn't change anyway. And maybe, just maybe, he wouldn't have to dream about his parents, Cedric and

Sirius accusing him of killing them again.

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Chapter 2

It was hell, Harry decided. Pure and utter hell. He felt like he had been at it for days. Yes, of course he knew that his memories would affect him something terrible. But so much? His eyes felt like someone had grated sandpaper over them, they were raw and puffy from all the crying he had done. His voice was all but none-existent because of the screaming fits. He was dead tired and exhausted all over: physically, mentally and emotionally; not even taking into consideration the mind-blowing headache he had developed. He had known that he had not cried, not grieved for Cedric, for all the injustice done to himself, for all the people that had suffered and died in the war and most important: not for Sirius before this. And the worst, the ministry disaster, was still to be done. But the reactions he had shown made him dread those memories even more.

Some good had come out of the whole ordeal though. He knew now that he could have done nothing to prevent Cedric's death. Harry would have never been able to convince Cedric to take the Cup alone, but had he opted to take it all for himself instead, Cedric would most likely have done just that. The outcome was entirely the same. Cedric would have died either way he acted, had he gone alone they would have tortured him first because Harry wasn't there. Add to that the fact that he could not have known about the portkey... Harry hadn't even signed up for the Tournament, but couldn't just back out of it because of the magical contract involved or though he thought.

It never occurred to him back in fourth year that he was not bound, simply because he had not been the one to put his name in – hadn't even known of it – or that Dumbledore could have pulled him out at any given time, as magical contracts could be voided if all parties in it agreed. Madame Maxime and Karkaroff hadn't wanted him to compete and it came back to Dumbledore once again. To say he was becoming tired of the manipulations of the old coot was an understatement.

After the fight with Voldemort and the following the stunt with Crouch Jr. and Fudges incompetence he had blocked and buried it all. The isolation with the Dursleys hadn't helped in any way, shape or form because he had to watch himself, as the smallest bit of weakness was exploited without mercy by his family. Left alone even by his closest friends, he had needed a way to come through with his wits intact, forcing him to push his feelings deeper and deeper inside every time he felt threatened or out of control. These festering emotions left him with a fierce temper on a hairline trigger. Having worked through them now, Harry felt like a huge burden had finally been lifted off of him, but he also felt hollow and without even a spark of energy left.

He had managed to come to terms with Umbridge and vowed to have her brought to trial. Harry knew for a fact that he was not the only one she had tortured with that bloody quill of hers. What stung him the most, even in retrospect, was the abandonment he faced at the hands of the other teachers, most likely on Dumbledores orders. The old coot was not much of a surprise, though, he had acted like that all summer. Snape, well, there was another person that needed to be thought a lesson. The greasy git acted even more immature and arrogant than Harrys father had in Snapes memory.

'I wonder, just how he would react to that particular comparison,' Harry mused idly. 'That explosion I would love to see. If only I could get him to see the truth in it. Get him to see that I am not my father. He could be a formidable ally. Dumbles manipulates him just as much as me if not more.'

Knowing his fathers shortcomings was in a way a blessing for Harry. It brought his fathers image into focus more than any other thing he had ever been told about him. To know his father had flaws and had overcome some of them and matured enough for his mother to accept him was way better than the image of Saint Potter everyone else had painted. It made his father human.

The only memories left, were those of the fake vision, Sirius death, the possession and the prophecy. Harry couldn't bring himself to face them, it hurt too much. He needed a break before he would be able to tackle the most recent debacle. Ignoring the frozen pictures of the past, he once again wandered around the circular room he was in. To his surprise the labels on doors had changed. They seemed almost readable now. Would they be completely understandable when he had sorted through all of his memories? It was highly likely. He was curious what was behind those doors. Sighing, he went back to the middle of the room. If he was done and they were clear in their meaning, they still would have to wait until he felt a bit more rested. Swallowing, Harry turned face to his four worst memories.

'If I want to get through them, I need to watch and analyze them. That will be harder than anything else I did today.'

He wasn't sure if he could sit back and just let them happen. The memories however did not wait for his decision. They lined up and he was abruptly pulled into them. Absolute panic hit him again, when he thought Sirius to be in danger. Terror in the wake of Kreachers lies, helplessness in the face of Umbridges hate and Snapes apathy. Determination to rescue the only family he had ever cherished. Worry for his friends safety, surprise at seeing Sirius, pure horror at his fall through the veil. Unimaginable pain when Voldemort was in his head, boundless rage at Dumbledore and the prophecy. The last few days in Hogwarts were hazy at best.

Sure, he had used his emotions as fuel to get through the days and function. But that was the sole reason he hadn't broken down earlier. He had scoured the library for useful books, because he needed something to focus on if he wanted to get through the days while Ron and Hermione were in the hospital wing and the summer. It had worked, Harry knew, but the Dursleys bombshell had been the absolute last straw for his strained psyche.

Tears were streaming down his face again, his sobs muffled by his

hands. Letting finally go, Harry curled up on the floor and cried himself into a much needed sleep. He was not aware of the changes around him. As he faded out of his mind and back to reality the room around him was altered. Gone was the dreary atmosphere, light flooded inside as the walls and ceiling became transparent, the plaques on each and every door stated now in clear script what was found behind them. Cushions and a low table appeared in one corner and a warm, welcome feeling spread. Back in his room, Harry curled up in his sleep, finally free of nightmares for the first time in more than two years, waking only a for few minutes to switch out the lights around the house.

It was early in the next morning when Harry was woken by the sunlight tickling his nose. He felt rested and full of energy after a good nights sleep. Blinking his eyes open, he realized that he was curled around a dirty robe. For a few moments he waited to be hit by his emotions like a sledgehammer but nothing happened. The torrent of emotions he experienced before was simply not there. He felt a deep grief for Sirius, but only time could heal that particular wound. The ache would probably always be there. A foreign peace had come over him and he knew without a doubt that his feelings had been dealt with. It was a good feeling not to be tied down by the past anymore. Stretching he got up to take a shower.

When he came back, his hair still wet, he drank some of the orange juice he had brought last night. Rummaging around his trunk he found the envelope with cash his uncle had mentioned, there were about 2.500 pounds in there. Taking 200 he slipped out of the bathrobe and into some clean clothes, which were shrunk to fit him. Mentally he made a list of what he would need to buy. A new supermarket had opened a few blocks away, it hadn't been ready when he left last summer. It was inside the edge of the outer wards Dumbledore had put up, as the blood protection wards only enclosed the property of 4 Privet Drive, so he would not sound the alarm by leaving the wards. A slight commotion outside caught his attention.

After a low pop a harsh voice could be heard.

"Fletcher! Get up! Merlin, sleeping in a drunken state on duty. Again! How Dumbledore could put you on guard after the fiasco last year is beyond me."

Mad-eye Moody had arrived and Harry started.

'Shit! If he takes one look through the house, he will find out about the Dursleys absence. I need to... that could work.'

Harry barreled down the stairs, calmed himself and stepped out of the front door. The key had also been in the envelope. Listening to the ongoing argument a bit, he interrupted them eventually.

"Good morning to you too, Mundungus, Professor Moody. It is a fine morning to wake up to the two of you fighting."

The incredulous silence had him smirking. Turning around he began walking towards the street, only to be stopped by Moody.

"I told you not to call me that! Call me Mad-eye or Moody, but leave that Professor-business well alone. A good morning to you as well. Tell me, lad, were do you think you are going?"

As Harry turned to face Moody, Dung mumbled something and apparated away.

Calmly looking at Moody he said: "Shopping. There is next to nothing edible left in the house and my aunt told me, that if I do the shopping, I get to decide what I want to cook and decent amounts of food. Only, I have to do lots of vegetables and fruit, because Dudley isn't allowed so much fat and sugar any more."

Watching Moody expression closely, he spoke up again when it went thunderous.

"And before you go storming in there: yes, I have cooked for them in the past. But normally I didn't get anything other than leftovers. Now I get to cook as much for myself as for them and my aunt is a terrible cook. She doesn't even manage to cook water without it boiling over, which I had thought to be impossible. When I'm at school there is no cooking, only sandwiches and the like as it is only my uncle and aunt. On weekends they order take out or go out to eat in a restaurant. Besides, I need something to do."

Looking pacified for the moment Moody continued questioning Harry.

"Didn't Dumbledore tell you not to leave the house? You shouldn't even be out here, much less going shopping."

"No. He told me not to leave the wards. The new supermarket is inside of them, so there isn't a problem. If that isn't enough for you, you are welcome to accompany me. I could use the help to get every thing in one go. Otherwise I might have to go twice, maybe even three times. I can only carry so much, you know?"

Harry's voice was flat. When Moody's expression turned into a frown he did a mental victory dance.

'Gotcha. Couldn't have your little pawn traipsing around the neighborhood alone, huh? And when we get back your shift will be over and it's late enough that my uncle, aunt and cousin could have already left the house and you know I'm safe and sound. I'm a genius.'

"Of course I'm coming with you. If you have your arms full, you're an even bigger target than every other time. Constant vigilance is useless if you can't react to threat."

Moody began muttering to himself about idiots and attention and had to do an almost run to catch up to Harry, who had walked away.

Shrouded in an invisibility cloak he followed him down the street.

Harry had hoped that he would find a good variety of things in the market and he wasn't disappointed. They had virtually everything in good quality. There was even a bakery, a stationery shop and a pharmacy located in the building. Internally he jumped with joy. On the outside, he looked like someone had killed his pet. Downtrodden, unhappy and weighed down by an invisible burden. He hadn't had a need to think before he had started acting, it had come as a instinctive reaction.

'Maybe my Slytherin side is finally coming out.'

"Hey, Mad-eye, are you coming in with me? Because if you do, you should ditch the cloak and put a glamourie on. It's really crowded in there."

With that final advice Harry stepped inside and got a shopping cart, not waiting for an answer.

About two and a half hours later he had a cart full of almost overflowing shopping bags filled with vegetable and fruit, cheese and sausage, pasta and milk, coke and an assortment of different juices and various other things. Stopping to get fresh bread and a couple of rolls he looked at the older man beside him.

"Watch the cart, will you? I just have to make a final stop to get some pens, ink, some writing pads, ring binders and notebooks. Could you maybe put lightweight and levitating charms on the bags? Otherwise we'll never get them home alone."

At Moody's consternated look he shrugged.

"If I were allowed to do it myself, I would. And I want to get home. It is a bit too crowded here for my tastes."

"You're awfully demanding this morning, laddie. Every other person in any other situation I would have long since chewed out. But you have more than enough on your plate as it is. And you are right, we should get you back as soon as humanly possible. It isn't safe out here. We should be there when my shift is ending. But you should work on your attitude, my lad."

15 minutes later Harry came out of the stationery with another shopping bag. The unlikely duo got rid of the cart and began the slow track back to Privet Drive, loaded with bags. When they finally arrived Tonks was already waiting for them, pacing the drive restlessly – and fully visible. Once again her hair was bubblegum pink. Just as they approached her, she stumbled over her own feet and sent all three of them crashing to the floor. Thinking of the eggs he bought, Harry looked at the bags. They were hovering about a quarter of an inch above the earth. Trying to extricate himself from the pile of limbs and bodies, he came face to face with Tonks.

"Wotcher, Harry. How are you? And were have you been?"

She rambled on: "You know you shouldn't leave the house. Something could have happened. It is too dangerous for you out there alone. You could have been kidnapped, or..."

Lifting an eyebrow, Harry climbed to his feet and began to bring the bags inside, completely ignoring Tonks and Mad-eye, who at this point had finally managed to stand up. When Tonks noticed Moody, her monologue took a different tune.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, sir. I didn't see you there. Did you hurt yourself? I was just so worried and..."

Coming back outside for the last two bags, Harry heard what she said and, at the look on Moodys face, he broke out in a laughing fit. Tonks fussing over a glamoured Moody, thinking obviously he was a muggle was too funny, especially with the murderous fury that graced

Moody's face.

"Nymphadora Tonks! You will stop this infernal babbling this instant! Have you gone completely stark raving mad? Are you trying to garner attention? Don't you have any common sense? You're an auror. Act like it!"

The baffled and affronted look on Tonks' face sent Harry into renewed laughter.

"Uhm... Excuse me, sir, do I know you? I do not think we have met. And Harry, stop laughing like a madman. This is not funny in the least."

"The... hahaha... the look... on your... haha... faces. I...it's just... too... hahaha... comical. Can... cancel the glamourie."

The light-bulbs over both their heads were almost visible.

And while the glamourie faded, Moody addressed Tonks: "You know that you have to practice constant vigilance, Auror Tonks! Why were you surprised when we showed up?"

Tonks' eyes bulged out and she went ashen.

"M... Mad-eye? I... you...eeep!"

She fainted, which only resulted in Harry laughing harder. Sending him a sharp look, Moody went and revived Tonks, the corners of his mouth twitching slightly.

"Enervate. Fainting, Auror Tonks? On top of everything else, you faint when surprised? How you ever got through training is a mystery to me. Get in gear and on post. We'll talk about that later. Laddie? The spells will end when I apparate, got it? I'll see you. And remember, constant..."

"... vigilance, I know, sir. Bye."

A soft pop later Harry was alone with Tonks. He lifted the two bags up and walked up to the front-door, where he looked at Tonks.

"You know, something could nest in there, if you don't close your mouth soon."

"Harry? Why weren't you here when I came? Dumbledore told you not to leave the house!"

"No, Tonks, he did not. He said not to leave the wards. The new supermarket is inside the wards and I even asked Mad-eye to come with me. The shopping needed to be done, there's practically nothing edible left and my relatives aren't here at the moment. Uncle Vernon is at work, Dudley is hanging out with his friends and Aunt Petunia decided to do a spa day. 'Sides, I get to cook what I want for doing it. Have a nice day, Tonks. Rest assured, I will leave the house if I want to at any given time."

The door shut behind him with a bang, leaving Tonks utterly speechless on the front lawn.

Sighing heavily, Harry put the last things away. That morning had been strenuous. But, he had managed to avoid suspicion by Moody. The food problem was solved, as was the problem with the cooking utensils. Luckily for him there had been a sale of quality pots and pans. He had also acquired some plastic cutlery and paper plates, which had already been transfigured into stainless steel and china respectively. Matter changes were some of the easiest transformation they had learned. The idea had hit him, as soon as he laid eyes on the packages arranged in a picnic basket. It solved his problem nicely, as they wouldn't revert back to their original shape like some other things – precious metals in particular. Transfigured gold would dissolve into its natural shape only seconds after the

transfiguration. Which was why the sorcerers stone was such a huge deal.

With all the junk the Dursleys had left him, it meant that he wouldn't have to buy nearly as much as he thought he would. He only needed to remain close to original matter and he would be fine. He could make a bed-frame out of a splinter if need be. It would still be a good deal of work, though.

Venturing into his room, his eyes fell once again on the torn robe. Harry shook his head. He would repair and clean it. It was still usable and the memories... they weren't triggered anymore. Taking it into his hands he shook it out to get a good look at it. Something silvery fell out of its folds and landed on the floor with a clang. Surprised, Harry put the robe down and moved to pick the object up. It reminded him slightly of the time-turner Hermione had used in third year. The hourglass shape and the sand were there, but the rest.... He examined it closer. Maybe they it was a more advanced model?

'Ahh. There is an inscription. What does it say?'

Engraved in tiny letters was One turn, one day, three at most.

'So you can go back only a full day and not just a few hours, huh? And only three days in one go? I wonder... Can you go back a month in three-day intervals? Could I save Sirius?'

Harry's thoughts went into a frenzy, only to be calmed down at the telltale crackling of magic around him.

'If it is possible, it can wait. If it isn't, then I couldn't do anything about it, anyway. I have accepted his death. But it would have been nice to have him back. It solves my problem about leaving the wards without anyone the wiser quiet nicely, though. I'll go back tomorrow morning at nine, the time when Moody and I were a block down the street this morning. Coming back here wont be a problem, if I do some

yard-work in the evening today. That should give me ample time in Diagon Alley and muggle-London.'

Reverently Harry set the time-turner on his bed. Casting *scourgify* and *reparo* on his robe, then he put it in his trunk. After that he walked down into the basement, looking for some wood to make a table and some chairs from. Half an hour later he was sitting in a comfortable chair, leaning over a writing pad. On the stove a pot of freshly made tomato sauce bubbled merrily alongside a pot of spaghetti. On the pad was a blueprint like drawing of number 4 next to a larger one. This one was the outcome of the remodeling Harry had in mind. The rooms would be shuffled around a bit and enlarged. The master bedroom would be his with a connection to the bathroom, Dudley's and his room would become a guest quarters with bathroom, each. The same went for the former guest room.

In the basement one room would be the library with a study. The muggle books alone would warrant that, but together with the books he copied in the Hogwarts library and the ones he would buy in Diagon Alley a place for them was sorely needed. A potions laboratory and a dueling room would fit in nicely, too. Not to forget a good training room with muggle work-out equipment. If he ever had muggles in his house, they were out of the way.

The livingroom would become a comfy den with TV-set and stereo system and the kitchen would give a homely feel instead of the current clinical one. And the cupboard would make a nice storage area. What he would do with the attic remained to be seen.

Abandoning his list and drawings, he got his lunch off the stove and onto a plate. Munching away happily, he was soon lost in thought.

'I'll need some books on magical decoration and remodeling to get everything the way I want it. Also, I need some good potions books. I'm good at cooking, so why not in potions? That greasy git can't teach worth a single knut. Hmm. Transfiguration, because we haven't

learnt all things I'll need and charms, household charms in particular. Dueling and DADA 'cause of Voldie, rituals too. Dark magic? Might be useful to know what I'm up against. Arithmancy and Runes? Mione said they play a huge role in spell development and wards. Meaning, I will need them. Maybe something on jobs and laws? I don't want to be an auror if I have to listen to those IQ-challenged idiots in the ministry. Knowing your rights is always useful. Hmm.'

All the while scribbling away on his pad, still eating.

Having finished his meal, Harry went to the fridge and got some strawberries out. After washing them they were sat on the table on a plate. Viewing the list of book topics he decided to add healing and parseltongue as well as magical theory. If you knew the how and why things were always easier. He briefly wondered why there wasn't a theory class at Hogwarts.

'Some history textbooks on something other than goblin rebellions, a compendium on pureblood families and a bit on animagi. Maybe some muggle biology and chemistry books? I wonder what would happen if you combine potions and chemistry? Would the explosions just get bigger, or could there be something useful? On that note: I need potions ingredients and new scales. Some books on electricity and some novels. And a bit about magic in other cultures. Those egyptian curse Bill talks about sound interesting. Are there devices or charms to learn other languages?'

Snacking on the strawberries, Harry compiled a list with a good deal of things he needed to buy, things he needed to transfigure and charm once the remodeling was done and things he needed to do to outwit Dumbledore. After he had written down everything he could think of, he put the dirty dishes in the sink and cleaned them. Looking at the once again sparkling kitchen, he nodded to himself and wandered out into the yard. The first thing he did was mowing the lawn, after that he weeded the garden well into the evening. It did him a lot of good to simply work outside in the sun, problems forgotten for

little while. Especially if he wasn't forced to do it by the Dursleys.

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Chapter 3

A little after sunset, just as Harry decided to call it a day and go back inside, at about 9:30 pm, he suddenly heard a low "Hoot" from some of the trees. Looking around he could make out Hedwig in a tree, her white feathers glowing a bit in the dark. He held his arm out and she floated down from the branch she had been perched on.

"Hoot. Hoooot."

Harry laughed when she hopped all the way up to his shoulder and nipped his ear slightly. "Yes Hedwig, I'm happy to see you, too. You have done well, coming here and finding me after nightfall. Did anyone pay attention to you?" He looked directly into her eyes. Shaking her head she hooted softly.

"Very well. That proves that my charm is working. Let's go inside, eh. I got some owl treats for you, my girl."

Walking slowly to the backdoor as not to jostle Hedwig, Harry opened the door. Before he closed it after himself, he took one last look around the garden and felt a hand touching his shoulder and a light breeze wafting by him. His other self had arrived safely back home, but obviously wasn't going to be in contact with him.

'Just as well,' he thought. 'He is here and if something didn't go according to plan I probably can not avoid it. But thinking about this house as home is weird. But I could feel the wards gain strength all the day. The Dursleys absence and the almost friendly parting are doing a small miracle concerning them.'

Locking the door, he wandered to his room, allowing Hedwig to hop down his arm and into her cage. Softly Harry began talking to her.

"You might have wondered, Hedwig, why I didn't just tell you to fly up and through my window? Something amazing happened. The

Dursleys moved out. Seems the house belonged to me all along and now, we are the only ones living here Hedwig. And they emancipated me, I can do magic freely now. Nobody screaming, waking us up in the morning. No more talk about shutting the bloody bird up. No more shared leftovers. What do you think, my girl? Sounds good?"

Hedwig looked at him with bright yellow eyes, happiness shining in them. "Hoot!"

"That's what I thought too, girl."

Harry then went down to the kitchen to make himself something for dinner. All that yard-work had him pretty hungry. Seeing that the lights had been turned on by his other self, he made a double portion of sandwiches. Half of which he left on the table when he went back to his room. While eating, he shared the whole story and the days events with his first present and friend. For an owl she was frighteningly intelligent.

After having finished his meal he decided that he wasn't tired enough and needed something to do. Hearing his alter ego in Dudley's room, he settled on reclining in his bed with switched of lights, thinking about the odd experience of being bodily in ones own mind. It had hurt, not from being there, but because of the memories. He had wondered why it had happened all day and had reached the conclusion that had something to do with those Occlumency lesson from Snape. His mind had been violated on regular basis and weakened a great deal. He would have to read a book about Occlumency and Legilimency to be entirely sure. It had done him a world of good though, he had never in his whole life felt so very free and unburdened as this morning.

Harry missed Sirius, terribly so. He knew, Sirius would have found it hilarious that Dumbledores plans had been brought up short by a pair of magic hating muggles, and without them even knowing.

'Right under Dumbles nose and he is none the wiser. What irony!'

Sirius, he knew, wouldn't have wanted him broken up over his death, he had wanted Harry to live and enjoy his life. Because of the memory episode he could let go of the guilt he felt. Viewing all those memories had shown him that he had acted the only way he could. Had he been allowed to deal with his emotions the summer before, he might have been calmer. But that didn't change anything about all the other things.

Not Umbridge trying to discredit him, torturing him and making his life hell. It didn't change the fact that Dumbledore wasn't available for him when he needed him the most. Didn't change the lies Dumbledore told or his silence concerning the possibility of Voldemort manipulating his dreams, his visions and the possibility of a possession through his scar. Dumbledore must have known that Snape wouldn't teach him jack shit about Occlumency, it might have been a try to open Harry's mind to the Dark Lord instead of closing it. He was almost sure of it because of the way his scar hurt worse after each lesson, because of the increasing intensity of the dreams and visions. Snape had just attacked him, hadn't even tried to explain. Had Harry know of his own vulnerability, he would have tried harder and he would have been aware of the likeness of his final vision being a trap.

Against all odds he had tried to get proof, but Kreacher had lied to his face. Going to the ministry had been his only possible course of action as no adult would listen to him. In the end, it didn't matter. He would have died for Sirius because he loved him so much. Just as Sirius would and did for him. It had been Sirius' decision – not Harry's. And come hell and high water he would have to accept that. Piling guilt needlessly onto himself would only do one single thing: it would dishonor his godfathers memory.

That would, however, not keep Harry from extracting revenge on Bellatrix Lestrange and on Dumbledore. Harry knew that he wasn't

free of guilt, but compared to the other two it was neigh on forgettable. Snape was another matter altogether. He didn't know what exactly Dumbledore had told his favorite spy. He got the idea though that it differed greatly from the true events. To decide if Snape had a considerable part in Sirius death, Harry would need to have a heart to heart talk with the man. That would not be an easy feat to arrange.

His thought wandered back to the afternoon. Working in the yard had had his thoughts bouncing around his head freely. He had thought of the concept of changing time and rescuing Sirius from the veil. All kinds of people had told him that time should be left alone, going on about how dangerous changing time was. He was reminded about something he had heard on TV while making dinner for the Dursleys one evening last year. The talk was about the grandfather principle. If you go back in time you could kill your grandfather accidentally, they said, and prevent your father or mother from being born – and in effect yourself. He had been horrified. Hermione had told him back in third year that he could erase himself if he met his past self. She had been proven wrong.

Harry had begun thinking about it this afternoon. And he realized one thing: the past could not be changed. It simply wasn't possible. If you killed your grandparents or parents in the past and weren't born, then exactly who went to the past to kill them? Nobody, as you were not alive to do it, resulting in them living on and you being born. It had been his own future self that had rescued them from the Dementors in third year, but only because he had already seen himself saving him. It was beyond confusing. In the end it meant, that if you did something in the past - from your point of view – like his Patronus, you had already seen it done when that particular point in time had been your present. It had already happened before you went back even if you had to actually go back to do it. Therefore it was impossible to change the past, as everything one could do had already been incorporated into the timeline.

The possibility of Sirius having already been rescued by him with, say,

an invisibility and a summoning charm was there. But it was more than slim. The only other chance Sirius had, was that the veil didn't actually kill people. There wasn't known much about it by anyone, there only were assumptions. Harry had decided in the afternoon to learn everything he could about the veil, if only to destroy it and spare other people the experience of a loved one falling through it accidentally.

He had also thought about the time-turner. He knew that the sand inside the hourglass was what enabled a person to go back in time. The sand had some interesting qualities. It needed magic as power to shift a person back in time. Only so much shifts were possible before the power ran out. The sand recharged itself through gathering ambient magic. The inscription could in consequence only mean that three days were the maximum to go back in time and it would need at least one day to gather the necessary power to go back another day. You were stuck at three days in the past without fault.

It would, however, help Harry in prolonging his holidays a good deal. Keeping Dumbledore and his Order of the burning chicken ignorant would also be a lot easier with its help.

Up until now he had always allowed other people to run his life. First it had been Dumbledore, proclaiming he, a wizard, wasn't allowed to grow up with his heritage for his protection. There was still so much about the magical world he did not understand. Children like Neville or Ron had been brought up with the lore, even Seamus was and he was a halfblood! Second it had been his relatives using him as their personal servant. He wasn't allowed to be a child, wasn't allowed to be happy or even learn properly in muggle school. God forbid if showed more intelligence than Dudley. He had taught himself how to read about two years before elementary school started, there was nothing else to do at the Dursleys and as Dudley didn't like books, they were Harry's salvation.

The forced underachieving in school had continued in Hogwarts. He did not like attention. If he had been first in all classes he would have gained attention. So he simply stopped learning and fooled around, shunning the library. Wouldn't Hermione be surprised if she knew just how good he could do in school? In the third place resided the whole wizarding world and their idiotic expectations. He had allowed himself to be shaped by them into someone he wasn't. And he paid dearly for it. A close fourth place was covered by the Order, caging him like he was a wild animal and not a teenager. Restricting him from growing up and doing what was necessary. Intriguing how both the Order and the wizarding public were somehow connected to and led by Dumbledore.

But now he was free and out of the control of others. His childhood with the Dursleys had taught him one thing over everything else. It had taught him how to survive. When he entered the magical world he had conveniently forgotten everything he learned. His godfather's death had been a painful wake-up call. Harry had decided that he was done playing around. He would do his absolute best in school. He would learn how to fight Voldemort – on his own terms. He would not allow Dumbledore and the Order to sacrifice his life for the so-called greater good. He would change the magical world instead of allowing it to change him. If magical people wanted to be so much better than muggles, then he would see it happen, even if he had to drag the magical world along kicking and screaming. He would get what he wanted and absolutely nobody would stand in his way. Not Voldemort, not Dumbledore and most assuredly not an idiot like Fudge. Maybe he couldn't do it alone. So what? There had to be heaps of people who didn't like the approach all three showed. It was a risk, sure. But life was full of those. You couldn't live without taking a risk now and then. You just had to make sure that the odds were in your favor every single bloody time you took one.

Rolling onto his side yawning, Harry curled up. He had had a busy day and was tired. Tomorrow – or was it today – would be busy as well. Drifting off into sleep, he wondered how Remus had reacted to

the past events. He had been the one to hold Harry back from following Sirius. Was he sad? Devastated by Sirius' death? He had lost the last of his close friends a second time. It couldn't be easy on him, especially with the full moon coming up and the wolf looming closer to the surface. Harry didn't want to lose Remus – not to the wolf, not to despair nor to Dumbledore. But he didn't know if it wasn't already too late for that.

Miles away, in an old house in London a man with light brown hair and amber eyes was tossing and turning in his bed. Nightmares had had a vice like grip on him for some time now and he couldn't seem to get rid of them. He was almost afraid to go to sleep these days. His thoughts always found their way back to a black haired man with steely grey eyes that carried a haunted look deep within them, more often than not hidden by mischief and a scrawny, black haired kid with spectacles in front of his green eyes. Sirius Black and Harry Potter. Sirius' death had hit Remus very hard. He had cried every day for hours, separating himself from the other Order members. He just couldn't stand their looks. There was so much pity in them. He hated it. They did not understand what Sirius had meant to him. And Harry. Harry was alone now. Deposited at the muggles for his own good.

What rubbish. Harry could never heal with the Dursleys anywhere in the vicinity. But Remus had been a bit surprised. When Moody had come back at lunch, he had told them that Harry had not seemed very downtrodden. He was up and about, if a bit snappish. Probably a defense mechanism. Harry didn't like anybody seeing him show weakness and put up a façade to cover it. But Remus had expected Harry to mope about and spend the day in his bed crying. Like he did. On the other hand: the Dursleys would use it against him every way they could.

The uproar at hearing that Harry was shopping for the no-good muggles was enormous. Molly had a screaming fit and was ready to apparate there and give them a piece of her mind. Remus himself hadn't been far behind. Dumbledore had been more concerned that

Harry had left the house and his relatives had allowed it. When Molly had torn into him, it had come to light that the headmaster had written the Dursleys a letter concerning recent events and told them to confine Harry to the house without telling him a reason. Which had brought his own temper to rise. And surprisingly the wolf had agreed with him. Trying to cage his cub in that house, not even letting him into the garden much less on the streets? Harry would go stir crazy! Not to mention that his anger at his relatives would reach new heights. If he ever found out about Dumbledores letter... Remus didn't even want to think about it. But it hadn't happened. The Dursleys had never cared what happened to Harry, they loathed his presence a good deal more than Snape did! To keep their nephew near them all the time was simply unthinkable for them.

When the headmaster had been disappointed that Harry had broken his word to remain there, it had surprisingly enough been Mad-eye who had looked at Albus like he had grown a second head.

flashback

"Really, Albus? He gave you his promise to stay inside the house for the whole summer until we can get him? Somehow I do not think so. Did you tell him to stay inside the house? Or did you tell him to stay inside the wards?"

"To stay inside the wards of course. But they only enclose the property. I told Harry that he would only be safe with his relatives."

Albus Dumbledore sighed. He looked a bit discomposed because of the chewing out he had received only minutes before.

"To think that he would break his word like that. I didn't expect that. I will have to go and talk to him."

'How lucky Severus isn't here. He would go of on a diatribe how Harry is exactly like James. Arrogant and rule breaking. He couldn't

be farther from the truth if you ask me,' Remus thought. 'He has his own personality, he is neither James nor Lily incarnated, just as it should be. But he has every bit of Lilys temper! And an additional bit all of his own.' Moodys angry voice brought him back to reality.

"Now stop right there, Albus. What is this about the wards? They stretch a few blocks in all directions from Privet Drive and he knows that. He didn't leave the wards. The supermarket is well inside of them. I should now, I was there with him. If he left the wards you would have known because of the stone Arabella has. I wouldn't have let him do that anyway. How can you say the lad broke his word, if he did not promise you to stay inside the house? He even asked me to come with him and didn't try to sneak out or anything. If he isn't safe inside the wards, he shouldn't be staying there at all."

The mad spinning of his magical eye showed how agitated he was.

"And if you are talking about those ominous blood wards of yours: I could sense them, yes. But they are so weak that a child could break them if need be. He is not protected any more inside of them than out! And they are only a last resort against You-know-who, shielding Harry from him. The outer wards were constructed with the goal in mind not to let any death eater through or anything else that means to harm the lad, because the blood wards do not take care of that. No need for him to be a prisoner in his own home any more than he already is. His relatives are unpleasant enough."

Remus knew that Sirius and James would have paid a pretty sum to see the old wizards stunned face. To have someone disagree with him was rare in it self. To be chastised and yelled at was even more rare. To have it happen by three people consecutively in the space of minutes was unheard of. Even more so, because two of these people normally were voices of reason and very hard to anger enough for an outbreak.

"Now, Alastor. He must stay there to strengthen the wards. The more

time he spends within them the stronger they are. He must..."

"Bullshit, Albus. I know enough about blood wards to realize that they are powered by emotions. If he is angry at his relatives their strength will deteriorate instead of increase. And three quarters of a day is more than enough time. Especially if he remains in the vicinity of the house. I don't know what you are trying to do. But you will stop it right here. You should know that taking that little bit of freedom away from him, could very well cause him to leave the wards or run away. You want him safe? Then back off. There are always at least two Order members watching over him. As long as you don't put Fletcher on duty again he is safe. I found the drunkard sleeping in the yard this morning. Again."

flashback end

The argument had gone on for some time, but the topic of confining Harry to the house hadn't risen up again. In the end, Dumbledore had gone back to Hogwarts after having taken Dung off the list of people guarding Harry. After seeing the way Mad-eye had treated his cub last year, Remus had known he liked Harry. But now... there was a newfound respect in his voice and actions. And to get the respect of Alastor 'Mad-eye' Moody wasn't an easy feat. He didn't know what happened between them, but he intended to ask.

After watching Molly mumble to herself about nasty muggles and poor Harry while she prepared dinner - the Weasleys were staying at Grimwauld Place for their safety - Moody had finally had enough. He had told her in no uncertain terms that it had been Harry himself who had told him that it had been his decision to go shopping and do the cooking for the Dursleys. Simply because Petunia Dursley couldn't cook worth a damn and would allow Harry to cook what he wanted and eat a healthy amount of the food because of the talk they had given the Dursleys. Blessed silence had graced the kitchen after that, well apart from the clanking of the pots and pans she used.

Remus wasn't surprised that Harry wanted something to do. Otherwise he would have thought of Sirius non-stop. Maybe it would do both of them some good if he went and talked to Harry. They missed him both. Until now Remus had been selfish. He hadn't thought about how Harry managed to deal with his loss. But it was too early for both of them. He would wait a few days, maybe a week before taking a watch and trying to get Harry to talk to him. The boy could close up tighter than an oyster if he did not want to talk.

Finally having come to that conclusion, the werewolf drifted off to sleep. His inner wolf, though, remained awake for a little while longer. Its happiness about soon being with the last of his pack, his cub, flooded through the mind of the wolf and over to the man. Curling up, it closed its eyes and began to dream about chasing rabbits and the occasional wizard. This night, they were not disturbed by dreams about the death of their pack-mate.

Early in the morning Harry woke up. It couldn't have been much later than 7 am. He hadn't been plagued by nightmares or visions throughout the night, for which he was very thankful. After grabbing a short shower he put on those of Dudley's hand-me-downs that were in the best condition and shrunk them down to fit. Going through his trunk he took out one of Dudley's old satchels that was still usable, if a bit threadbare. Inside he put his lists, his invisibility cloak, his wand, some cash and his money bag, as well as one of his Hogwarts robes that had the insignia and crest taken off. Thinking a bit, he put a piece of dark cloth inside, to be used as a bandana to hide his scar and lastly the time-turner. Slipping into his trainers he went down into the kitchen and fixed himself some fruits and cereal with milk for breakfast.

Having eaten, Harry put the dishes in the sink and thought about the task he would be undertaking. Taking his wand out, he changed the color of his hair to reddish blond and put the dark bandana on. Doing a temporary sight correction spell took care of his glasses and with another charm his eye-color had been changed to hazel. Looking into the glass of the window he saw a totally different person.

'Well, nobody will be able to tell that this is me. I'm almost ready to go.'

"Tempus."

The smoky number showed him that it was already a little past 9 am and he hurried to put his invisibility cloak on. Slipping the time-turner around his neck, Harry heard his Double coming down the stairs and open the back door. He took his satchel, wrapped himself closely in his cloak and walked into the yard. Watching his Double for a moment, he took the time-turner in his hand and spun the hourglass one full turn. The sensation was just as weird as back in third year, but much better than the feeling of a portkey.

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Chapter 4

All around him Harry could see colors blurring by, the feeling of being pulled backwards was much stronger than the one in third year. It lasted longer too. When it stopped, he was still standing in the garden under his cloak. His double however, was nowhere to be seen. Slipping the time-turner off, he put it in one of the pockets of his satchel. Then he began to slowly walk around the house to the front and down to the street. About two blocks away he could see Moody and his past self. They were almost at the point where they had to turn down another street. When he couldn't see them any more, he walked away in the opposite direction.

Harry could feel something tingle all over his body the very moment he walked through the outer wards. Continuing on towards the center of the city he looked around a bit. He didn't come here often. There was the sign for the public library, a place he had never been to. The Dursleys hadn't allowed it. If he borrowed a book back then it was from the school library. He made a mental note to check the library out sometime this summer. Walking on he saw a shopping district and some cafes that hadn't opened yet, it was still too early.

When he finally arrived at the main bus station Harry checked the timetables. He was lucky, he only had to wait a couple of minutes before a bus of the line he needed came around the corner. Still under his cloak, Harry entered the bus after a few people had left it. Only two elderly women got on and it was relatively empty. It would take a while to get to London, but Harry had opted for the muggle method because he thought that the knight bus would have been much too conspicuous. Besides – Stan and Ernie knew him and he was sure that after the last few years any magic near his location would be monitored by Dumbledore. His disguise wouldn't help him one bit if Dumbledore was involved.

Watching the scenery fly by, Harry's thoughts drifted a bit. Only a few people were getting on and off the bus and he remained safe under

his cloak in an area of empty seats in the back. His thoughts were surprisingly not on Sirius. Nor were they on Dumbledore, the Order or Voldemort. Harry was puzzling over the past and the magic he had done when he was in elementary school and before. Accidental magic it was called. He had never gotten a letter on underage magic before the incident with Dobby. Why was that? The magic must have shown up on the ministry detection globes. And he had never gotten a letter for blowing up Aunt Marge. Nor had he gotten one for the lumos he had used last year. They should have put it in with the Patronus.

Maybe, wandless magic showed up in an other way than magic done with a wand? McGonagall had told him once that accidental magic was uncontrolled. Your magic reacted to your emotions, sometimes in odd ways. Like when he had found himself on the school roof. Had that been apparition? Underage magic was done purposefully with a wand and incantations. On the other hand he had received a warning for Dobby's levitation charm. But Dobby had wanted him to get into trouble. Enough trouble to be expelled from Hogwarts.

'I could have a chat with Ollivander about that topic. It doesn't concern me any more, but I'd like to be sure. I need to buy a wand holster anyway. And I need to find a way around the priori incantatem effect of brother wands. Otherwise I'll be dead when I meet my favorite Dark Lord the next time. The ministry allows only one wand per wizard, only exception are MLE employees. I could get an illegal wand in Knockturn Alley, I'm sure. But somehow I get the feeling that wouldn't go over too well. My normal wand is too well known, I would be caught in no time. And I doubt that I'll find a wand that is as powerful and compatible with me as my present holly wand.'

Paying attention to the countryside for a moment, Harry realized that they had reached the outskirts of London already. It wouldn't take long now to reach the city and get to Charing Cross Road, where the Leaky Cauldron was situated. Soon he would be entering Diagon Alley, the main shopping district of wizarding Britain.

'Wonder what and were the others are. I could ask Tom, he should know. Hopefully it won't be too crowded at this time of the day. And shopping for school is a long ways off, it is after all only the second day of the summer holidays.'

Blinking, when sunlight suddenly reflected directly into his eyes, Harry wondered just how long his visit at Gringotts would be. There was some paper work to be dealt with, he needed to visit the family vault and he needed to get some money out. Hopefully there was another method of paying, because wizarding money tended to be bulky and heavy.

'Ah, the wonders of muggle credit cards. As greedy and financially adept as the goblins are, maybe they adapted the concept? If not, I'll simply recommend it to them. The only ones who can't at least appreciate them are those prissy, uptight purebloods. To be able to pay without a problem in both the magical and the muggle world, without having to carry huge amounts of money around or having to change it before a shopping trip, would be simply fantastic.'

Looking up again as the bus slowed down and came to a stop, Harry left his seat hurriedly and got off the bus. He walked slowly towards a big shopping center, avoiding people left and right. Entering the building he searched for the toilets. Taking the escalator up to the third level he quickly entered a stall and locked it. Now, he was finally able to take his invisibility cloak off. The last few minutes under it had been rather dangerous, as people could have walked into his invisible self. That wouldn't have been good. Stashing it away in his pack, he flushed the toilet and left. After a bit of window shopping he continued on to the Leaky Cauldron and some difficulties later, Harry finally entered the pub. It was remarkably empty compared to any other time he had been here. Giving a nod in greeting to Tom, he went out the back-door and tapped the brick. Then he remembered to take his robe out of his satchel and slipped it on, over his clothes. It wouldn't do to attract unwanted attention, simply because he

wandered Diagon Alley in muggle clothes.

For the first time in two years Harry Potter would set a foot in Diagon Alley. The magic he felt all around him was exhilarating. Taking a deep breath he strolled through the arc and on to the bank. Like the first time he had seen it, the magnificent white building left him in awe. Shaking his head clear, he entered the bank. The hall was almost devoid of people and Harry could see a few bored goblins. An information terminal was located a bit to the side and that is where he went.

"Excuse me?" The goblin regarded him with disinterest.

"I need to speak with the goblin responsible for the Potter estate." The corners of the goblins mouth went downward and he bared his teeth.

"The only one with any rights towards the estate of the Potter family would be Harry Potter. Leave right this instance or I will call the security on you."

A bit surprised, but also pleased Harry removed the bandana around his head and removed his vault key from his pant pocket.

"I am Harry Potter. I had to disguise myself because I don't like the riot I cause wherever people recognize me. I'm also trying to steer clear of any of Dumbledores lackeys."

The goblins eyes went wide as he took a closer look at Harry and his key. At the mention of the Hogwarts headmaster his face donned a dark look.

"That is entirely understandable, Mr. Potter. Please, follow me. I'm going to bring you to Safetooth, he is the one overlooking the estate of the Potters. It is right down this corridor."

A wall opened to allow them through and Harry's guide knocked quietly on a door. After being called inside, the goblin gave a nod to Harry and went back to his terminal. Swallowing, Harry opened the door and walked into the office, where a goblin with several gold teeth awaited him.

"Mr. Potter! This is a surprise. I hadn't thought that you would come by this soon. What may I do for you this morning? Please, have a seat."

Beginning to feel a bit spooked at the polite behavior of the goblins this morning, Harry sat down heavily in comfortable armchair.

"Mr. Stanton informed you of my emancipation?"

Getting a nod from the goblin, he continued.

"I need an evaluation of the estate, I only have copies of some of the deeds. Mr. Stanton wrote me that it would be sent to me. But with Dumbledores interference in my life I doubt that it would ever reach me. Add to that the fact that he doesn't know about my adult status. I'd like to keep it that way. I also need to make a visit to the family vault. Why exactly was I not informed of its existence?"

At the mention of Dumbledores name the look on Safetoothes face went dark. Harry gradually got the impression that the old coot was a persona non grata for the goblins. Maybe he tried to meddle in their affairs one time too often? But the reaction to hearing that he had no former knowledge of the family vault was very strange. First there was astonishment, then disbelief and then... the utter fury on the goblins face had Harry sliding back into the chair. He had the strong wish to just bolt out of the office. Realizing that he was not the target of the creatures anger, had him relaxing slightly.

"You... did not know?"

Harry shook his head.

"After being informed by your parents lawyer about your placement with your mothers sister, I collected the evaluations. They were not to be informed of your wealth. But I made some arrangements concerning your first visit with us. As you would have most likely been accompanied with someone of Dumbledores trust, I ordered a letter to be sent to you right after that. Mr. Dumbledore has been one of the persons to try and gain at least a temporary control of the Potter estate as its executor numerous times. Luckily your parents had left some statements with us that he could not circumvent. This letter contained no monetary information, but that about your ancestral vault. I got an answering letter signed Harry Potter, stating you had no interest in this vault. It made me a bit suspicious, but every other letter came back unopened, as if the owls couldn't find you."

"Somehow that doesn't surprise me as much as it should. So, Dumbledore intercepts my mail, reads it and assumes the right to answer it and even sign it in my name? Can I sue him?"

The look Harry got from the goblin at that particular statement was rather comical. First came blinking as if an expected reaction failed to occur, then came disbelief and at last Safetooth simply sat there, unable to form any words. Shaking himself out of his stupor the goblin answered.

"Yes you can. Everything he did is against the law. It could even get him an Azkaban sentence, well if it wasn't Dumbledore."

"Could you look into the matter, Safetooth? Right at the moment it wouldn't do any good, but later... There is also my parents will that he disrespected. Yes? Thank you."

"No, Mr. Potter, thank you. Up until now there was never anybody who wanted to do something against his infringements. He has been

putting a good deal of pressure on us goblins, to get us to do his biddings. We did not want another war with wizarding kind on us because of one mans obsession with power and control, but couldn't do more than deny his requests. He has been very angry that he could not get control over your estate. Your parents were great people. Your mother in particular had very good relationships with what the ministry calls magical creatures. She treated everybody like an equal. You, Mr. Potter, are very much like her in that department. Now, you wanted an evaluation of your assets. Am I right in thinking that you want to receive evaluation statements only personally?"

Harry had been stumped by what the goblins said. Dumbledore had made some enemies it seemed. And in the wrong places obviously. At the goblins question he nodded.

"Absolutely. I do not want them in the wrong hands. I still wonder how the old man got his hands on my vault key."

Safetooth, who had fetched a file, sputtered. "He had your key?"

"Yes. Gave it to Hagrid when he came to get me and then my school supplies. Could he have taken anything out of my vault?" Shaking his head the goblin sat down in his chair again and put the file in front of Harry.

"No, he couldn't. He would have needed a written statement of you signed in blood or with the family ring to allow him to withdraw anything. But it is troubling. I will have to make some inquiries. In this file are all evaluation statements of your estate. Take your time. The Potters were an old and quiet wealthy family."

Safetooth was right. He needed a good amount of time to go through everything. There had been a huge amount of money to begin with, but the investments made by his parents and grandparents had multiplied the amount. He wasn't only wealthy, he was loaded. If Dumbledore had gained control of this – he didn't even want to think

about it. And that was only money. The shares and properties were not included. The copies of the deeds he had found in his folder when he had leafed through it, had told him of several apartments and cottages all around the world, each and every one of them unplotable. He would never be in need of money or a home, that much was sure. Closing the file, Harry put it back on the desk and looked Safetooth in the eye.

"Is there anything else I have to look at, or may I visit the family vault now?"

"Don't you want to change anything?"

"No. I do not know enough about finances to do that. It will take time. The arrangements as they are right now are OK. They have already worked quiet well for the past fifteen years. Why change that? But I have a question on another topic. I want to make several large purchases today, in the muggle world as well as in the magical. Is there any better method than carrying large amounts of money with me?"

"Very well. Thank you for your trust. Not many humans trust a goblin with their money this way, nowadays. And to answer your question: we offer enchanted moneybags for wizarding money and enchanted wallets for muggle currency. For both you only have to think of the amount you need and only their owner can use them. They are keyed to ones magical signature and can't be fooled by polyjuice potion. Both have a fee of 40 galleons per year for the feature." Harry grimaced.

"Oh well. Shan't look a gift horse in the mouth, huh? Let's go down to the vault first. We can set that up afterwards."

He stood up and put the bandana on again. It wouldn't do for anyone to recognize him, least of all Bill Weasley who worked at Gringotts. When he didn't get an answer, he turned around to look at Safetooth.

By the looks of it, he had managed to shock the goblin a second time this day. Thoroughly. Sighing, he went ahead and asked the goblin what the problem was.

"What is it, Safetooth?"

"Mr. Potter, you are not satisfied with these possibilities? We have never had a complaint about it."

"No, I'm not entirely satisfied. I had hoped for something better. I would guess, that these options are normally offered to the members of the old pureblood families, right?"

Upon receiving a nod he continued.

"In the magical world it is normal to pay large amount this way. In the muggle world it is a bit suspicious if a large bill is paid in cash. Muggles have credit cards nowadays. It is a plastic card, about this size" he showed his ID card "with a computer chip. They are used to transfer an amount of money from the owners account directly into that of the shop. Muggleborns and Halfbloods normally have accounts in a muggle bank with a credit card connected. It makes business a lot easier. There are also cashpoint machines were you can get money out of your account if you need some cash. Nobody would walk around with a couple thousand pounds. Those purebloods almost never set foot into the muggle world and don't bother to acquaint themselves with muggle customs. If they do, they don't make large purchases or do it by check."

Another silence. Wonderful. Now, if he could only manage that with Dumbledore this world would be a better place to live in.

"That... is ingenious. I wonder why nobody mentioned this before? I will have to have that investigated. If we could imitate that with magic... the possibilities... it would make so many things easier. Would you mind terribly if another goblin brought you down to your

ancestral vault? Take your time. You'll be brought right back up here."

Ringling a bell, he told the appearing goblin: "Griphook, bring Mr. Potter to his family vault. Bring him back to me when he is finished." After that he shooed them out the door and closed it.

"Now that was prompt. I hadn't counted on such a reaction. You'd think I had given him a philosophers stone. Oh well. Let us get moving, Griphook. I don't have an endless amount of time at my disposal."

"Of course, Mr. Potter. If you don't mind, what did you tell him to get that reaction? I haven't ever seen one of the senior employees act like this."

They had reached the carts by now.

"I simply told him of a concept used widely in the muggle world, when conducting business. He seemingly hadn't heard about it."

Climbing in, the goblin got the cart to move. Speeding down deeper and deeper into the bowels of Gringotts it took quite some time to reach the levels of the family vaults.

"The ancestral vaults are those that are on the lowest levels. When Gringotts was founded, there were already some dwarven tunnels here, along with some natural caverns. The caverns are where we are going. The upper parts were mined out in newer times when space down there began to decrease. To gain access to a family vault, you need to be of blood. But distant relatives and those married into other families are not recognized by the magic on the door."

The cart had begun to slow down, pulling to a stop in front of an ornate set of doors adorned with the word Potter and a crest. The crest was a bit surprising for Harry. He would have thought there would be a lion or gryffin and lots of red and gold. Neither was the case. The

background was a dark grey, a blue colored Chinese dragon wound around a katana with an opal on the bottom of its hilt.

He slowly stood up and left the car, walking up to the doors. Looking over his shoulder he asked Griphook what to do. "Just lay your hands on the doors. They will open if they acknowledge you as a Potter." Doing as he was told, Harry shuddered as he felt something ancient looking him over, judging, and then welcoming. The doors clicked and then opened with a groan.

"Griphook? Why aren't you coming?"

"Only family members can enter a family vault. I can only barely stand on the landing. Go on in, I'll wait for you. Take your time."

"Oh. Right."

Stepping through the doors and entering the vault was like walking into another world. Piles upon piles of gold coins were laying everywhere in the vault, chests full of gemstones located on shelves on the walls, joined by weapon racks with swords of all origins like long-swords, rapiers, katanas and scimitars and bookcases with some very old tomes. There were a few knick-knacks here and there, some rolled up tapestries and a shelf with wands. That was where Harry went first. Each wand was in a case labeled with the name and the birth- and death-dates of the owner. At the very end of the board he found his parents wands and an empty case. Next to them was a notice addressed to him.

My dearest son,

If you are reading this, then we are dead and have not lived to see the day
when you received your first wand. If you have lived with Sirius, Xanria or the

Longbottoms they should have brought you're here on that very day.
If you
were however placed with your mothers sister – against our wishes I
might
add – than nobody is to say when you will finally find this. Every
Potter is
brought to the family vault to receive a very special enchantment for
their wand.
It seems to it, that a wand that has not been in contact with its owner
for too long
a time is automatically relocated into its case in the vault. It takes
care of your
wand, so that it can not remain in the wrong hands for long. For every
new
Potter there will be a new empty wand case. You need to place your
wand in
the case to label it. An extra enchantment establishes you as only
possible user
of the wand, nobody else will be able to cast with it. Anyone who tries
will receive
a nasty shock. If someone tries to snap it, the relocation will be
immediate and a
fake will be left to be snapped. You might want to take a look at the
weapons and
books. There are similar notices located there to explain the use and
functions.
My son, know that your mother and I love you more than life itself.
The day you
were born was the happiest day in our life.

Love, your father, James Potter

By the time Harry had read the whole letter he had tears streaming
down his face. Sure, he had known that his parents loved him, but to
see written proof of it.... Trembling he placed his wand in the case,

watching closely as it glowed white for a few moments. After the glow ended he reclaimed his wand, looking at the label. Heron A. J. C. Evans Potter it read. He blinked, read it again and decided to take a good long look at his birth certificate – if he could locate it, that is. Taking the piece of parchment with the notice from his parents he wandered over to the bookcases, looking for a similar one. This one was in a different handwriting.

My dearest son,

If you are reading this, than our home has been destroyed and your father and I are dead. If that has come to pass I am very sorry. Sorry to leave you alone in a hostile world and sorry that I can't tell you how much I love you anymore. But this note is here to explain the bookcases.

These bookcases are very special. They have enchantments and wards

placed upon them to save them from destruction. If they are in danger

of being destroyed they relocate to this vault automatically. Only a Potter

or the spouse of a Potter can get a book out of these cases or new books

added to the wards. Every single book keyed to the wards will be recalled

to its place in one of the cases in the face of danger. Every book keyed to

the wards can also be sent back to its place with a tap of your wand to the

spine. Also, there are auto-repair charms placed on the books as well as

charms to protect them from age when keyed into the wards. There is a

manual found with the catalogue describing how to add books to the wards,

how to create new bookcases, how to find books and how to create a new system. Some of the books are incredibly old and rare. Take good care of them and yourself. I hope they will help you in your life and may they bring as much happiness to you as I found with them. You should also take a good look at the wands and weapons in this vault.

Love, your mother, Lily Potter.

PS: There are some things I left with your Aunt, you should collect them as soon as possible and look through them.

Tears were streaming anew. These notes were seriously shaking him. Harry had to close his eyes. Taking a few shaky breathes he managed to stop crying, wiping his eyes with his robe sleeve. He looked at the cases. There was no way in hell he would leave the books in the vault. It was his mothers legacy to him. There were at least 40 cases, probably the whole library of the Potters. To protect it this way was ingenious, the knowledge in these books was priceless. The loss, should they have been destroyed, would have been immense. Brandishing his wand he began shrinking the cases down. When they were the size of matchboxes he used the packing charm to stack them into his pack. His mothers note was placed together with his father in the same pocket as the time-turner. When he was ready, he wandered over to the weapon racks. A third note was hanging from one of the racks. Harry could now recognize his fathers handwriting.

My dearest son,

If you are reading this note, than your mother and I are dead. I

had hoped to be able to accompany you here on your seventh birthday to select a weapon for you. Every Potter male is brought here, for a weapon to choose him. He will then learn the art of using that weapon as well as hand-to-hand combat. A Potter female is usually only trained in hand-to-hand combat as she won't retain the family name. Walk close to the racks. From some of the weapons you

will feel a pull. Hold your hands out in front of you and concentrate on finding the weapon suited best for you. It will fly directly into your hands. It has happened rarely, but sometimes there will be two weapons which are suited for someone. In case something happened

to the family before the training could be given there are some interactive

training books for the weapons and the martial arts in the library. Search

for them in the catalogue. The enchantments on the weapons are the same as those on the wands, but there are some additional ones, like

an ever-sharp charm and a self cleaning and indestructible charm, as well as notice-me-not and invisibility charms. Those are also found on

the sheaths. Believe in yourself, my son. I hope you will lead a long and

happy live. May these abilities help you in the ever present face of danger. One last thing: the Potters are an old family. It has been a long time past that we came to England from foreign shores. Our roots

have remained alive through all that time. You will find the information

in the library along with some books on the family magic. The only other

things in this vault you need to take are the family tapestry and the family ring. (They also have the enchantments. Wouldn't do to have them stolen or destroyed.) Study the tapestry well, my son, and let our

ancestors be of help to you. You will know the tapestry because it has
Potter crest on its back. Farewell my dearest son, may you remember
me fondly and find joy in your life.

Love, your father, James Potter

Harry tried to swallow the lump in his throat, repeatedly. It didn't help. Sobbing heavily he broke down and sank to the floor. It hurt. It hurt so much. An anguished scream tore out of his throat. For maybe the first time in his life he could really feel the loss of his parents. Up until now they had only been an abstract concept, something he couldn't even remember to have known. It sank in right now just what he had missed out on, apart from the love of a family because of their untimely deaths. It took him quite some time to regain a bit of his composure. Still sobbing, he uttered something that would change his life forever.

"I swear that I will not die or rest until you are completely and utterly annihilated, do you hear me, Tom Riddle, fake Lord Voldemort? For all that you have taken from me and others I will end your existence once and for all!"

And the ancient magic around him acknowledge his oath, making him bath in an unearthly glow of power.

Far away in a run down manor a snakelike figure felt an icy cold creep up its spine. Voldemort, self christened Dark Lord shuddered as fear crept up on him, like he had never known before. Something had changed. And it wasn't good.

Chapter 5

Having finally calmed down again, Harry stood up slowly. His eyes were red and puffy, but he felt better now. It hurt to know that he would never get to know his parents. It hurt that they weren't there to tell him how proud they were of his accomplishments or how much they loved him. It hurt that they couldn't teach him about what they liked most. But now he had something to lessen the pain. He had their notes, telling him about the depth of their love for him, helping him along his way in life. The grief that had overcome him had lessened. He knew it probably wouldn't leave him for the rest of his life, but time would take the edges of and the good memories he had now would help to remember them in life and not in death. The weird power surge was another thing altogether. Right now, however, he did not have the time to think about it. In the evening when he got home there would still be time to do it.

Harry trudged over to the tapestries and found the one with the crest in the middle of the shelves. Next to it, he found a small wooden box with intricate carvings on it. Inside he found a ring with the Potter crest on it, it had to be the family ring. After shrinking the tapestry he put both items in his satchel before he walked back over to the weapon racks. Taking a closer look than the first time, he now noticed that there were a few other weapons on them as well. Not very many, only some throwing knives and daggers as well as a most peculiar looking scythe.

'Weird. All those are bladed weapons and there is not even one single shield here. No Staffs, spears or other weapons like nunchakus, bolas or a whip. And there doesn't seem to be any other fighting gear like battle robes, armor or boots. Were they all destroyed or were they simply not needed? I guess I'll find out when I get around to figuring out the roots of my family. The things I need to do later start to grow into an ever increasing pile.'

As he walked along the racks with slow steps he felt a slight pull to

some of the swords and knives. Harry stepped to a spot where he was overlooking all the racks and held his arms stretched out in front of him, his hands open and ready to grip whatever came flying at him. The katana that came rushing at him was no surprise. He was however not ready to have a set of throwing knives and the scythe flying towards him at the same time.

'Dad said one weapon. Maybe two, but certainly not three!'

His thoughts were cut short when the handle of the scythe slammed into him after he had caught the katana. Already off balance he was sent stumbling to the floor as soon as the knives crashed into his chest in their sheathes.

"Ugh. Outch. I don't wanna do that again."

Having climbed to his feet once again Harry tried to hold on to his new weapons long enough to set them down without damaging them.

'Now, how do I get them out of here? My backpack isn't that big and I do not want to shrink them. But even if they can turn invisible at my will, they'll still be in the way. Especially the scythe. I wonder what is up with it. It is a very unusual thing to use as a weapon. Dad's note said that there are books about fighting with these weapons. There should also be an inventory of the weapons in the vault and their properties. I hope.'

After taking a look around he sighed.

'Seems like I will have to shrink them down after all. I don't want anyone to notice them.'

He did just that and stowed them away in his now full satchel.

'I will have to buy a better book-bag. One with a featherlight charm

that is enlarged on the inside. It could also be a good birthday present for Mione. I'll have to look into that.'

Harry took a final look around and filled his pouch with money. There was nothing left to do in here, well apart from looking at the other tapestries, but that could wait. After swinging the satchel over his shoulder he left the vault. The doors closed behind him with a silent bang. Griphook took a look at his face and wordlessly set the cart into motion after Harry sat down inside it. While they drove all the way up to the surface the goblin glanced repeatedly at him, but he never voiced his curiosity at what happened in the vault or the odd power surge. Having brought the teenager back to Safetooth's office he bowed and wished both of them a good day, before he vanished into the bowels of the building.

The elder goblin had an odd look on his face. Had it been any other creature, Harry would have thought it a look of glee. Safetooth simply watched him, until he began to squirm under the intense gaze.

"Mr. Potter."

"Yes?"

"Mr. Potter, I have been charged with the task to tell you that the entirety of the management of Gringotts is in your debt. You have brought a concept to our attention that will enable us to ease the business transactions of our customers, give a better service to all wizards and witches in the muggle world and after some time in the wizarding world, as well as make a good deal of extra money. Credit cards will be offered to all current customers and every new one. You, Mr. Potter, will get 5 percent of the profit made this way. It has been a long time since a human has had a share in goblin business. You can be quiet proud of yourself. As an additional thank you, you are presented with the first credit card offered by Gringotts. Unbreakable and keyed to your magical signature, it is safe against loss and theft. The PIN is set the first time you have to state it. No fees will have to

be paid by you for any transactions made or for access to the option."

Harry swallowed heavily.

"You can't be serious. I haven't done anything but mention the cards. How on earth does that value a share? And how did you get that ready in this short span of time?"

The world around him seemed to have taken on an odd motion. Safetooth smiled.

"Ah, but Mr. Potter, you misjudge the part you played in this whole situation. The increase in business and profit if the concept is used worldwide is enormous. And you brought it to our attention. Other people simply let it slide. You also explained the concept, which shortened our research time. The short time span – well, you spent more than 2 hours in your vault."

"That is still not enough time to get such a large project done. The research alone should have taken up more time. There is no way you could have gotten functioning cards and the whole system set up and ready to run. No fucking way!"

Harry knew that he sounded desperate, but he simply couldn't help himself. It was too much. Sure, the idea of giving the concept to the goblins if they didn't know about it had crossed his mind, but never seriously. He hadn't expected to run across such a lack of information. Especially as credit cards weren't exactly a new concept in the muggle world.

"You are, of course, right, Mr. Potter. But I will let you in on secret. Within Gringotts there is a room to be found. In this room we develop things, like the card system. It is also used for big decisions among our people. This room can be used only once every five years. However much time passes on the inside, in the outside world only 30 seconds will pass. Time is money, after all, wouldn't you say, Mr.

Potter?"

The emotions the goblin showed were disconcerting. It didn't seem right. Goblins were supposed to sneer and growl at humans, not smile at them.

"Sure, Safetooth. I suppose for the moment it is only usable in the muggle world?"

Harry had gone over his limit of being shocked in one day now. He wasn't able to show any more emotions, he just took it as it came. If this was any indication for the rest of the day, he didn't even want to think about it.

"Yes. It will take a while for us to inform the shop owners and bring the concept into use. For the time being you are given this money bag. As soon as the system is set up in the magical world the enchantments on it will cease to function. But for today you will need it. Gringotts hopes to do business with you again sometime soon, Mr. Potter. You should come by in a couple of days to inquire about your godfathers will. The necessary procedures should have been done by then."

Harry threw the goblin a shrewd look.

"Of course, Safetooth. Any time. But I do hope that I will not be so thoroughly shocked next time. But what do mean about my godfathers will? The ministry hasn't declared him dead, much less innocent."

"Oh right, you wouldn't know about that. Gringotts does not answer to ministry law. Innocent or convicted does not mean much to us. We only freeze an account in the direst of situations. And a testament recorded by Gringotts is tied into the life force of a wizard or witch. If they die, the will is set to be enacted. As any information concerning the reading of the will probably won't reach you, you will have to

come by personally. Do you wish for me to tell them to not send you anything?"

"No, Dumbledore would get suspicious if the invitation wouldn't get sent. But have them deposit a copy at the information terminal. I will collect it there. I wish you a good day."

Sighing he stood up and left the office, only to lean against the wall once the door had closed behind him. He felt utterly exhausted suddenly. This was not, how he had imagined it to be. Not in the least. He brought himself to his feet and walked out to the main hall, where he gave a short nod to the goblin at the information terminal and left Gringotts. He did not see the redhead staring after him, shocked by the reaction of the goblin. It had offered a short nod and a smile in reply.

Bill Weasley had had a very confusing morning so far. Two hours ago a sudden rush had gone through the bank, but he hadn't been able to gather any information about it at all. The secrecy the goblins had displayed had been a surprise for the cursebreaker. The satisfied expressions the senior employees and managers displayed after coming out of their meetings were disconcerting to say the least. Only a major increase in business would be able to extract those emotions out of a goblin. With the actual situation in the magical world that was more than a bit suspicious. And now a young man – younger than himself, almost still a boy – had come out of the estate manager section of Gringotts. He had greeted a goblin, not treated it with disdain or ignorance as Bill had thought he would have. Purebloods were the only ones with large enough estates to have business in there and they never acted that way. He hadn't gotten a good look at the young man and only seen reddish blond hair and a black robe. The biggest shock had however come when the goblin, who had looked up as the young man exited the corridor into the hall, had returned the greeting and smiled. He had never before seen a goblin show respect for a human customer. Hell, even the human employees weren't always treated with curtsy. He would have to tell

Dumbledore about it, even if he didn't want to. But it was too great of a risk not to.

If the goblins had thrown their lot in with the Dark Lord even his loyalty wasn't enough to stand with them. You-know-who would kill him and his family without a second thought. And anyone the goblins treated in such a friendly way could be someone able to help get them on the light side. He didn't like Dumbledore much, because he knew from the goblins about his violation of the law and the pressure he put on them. At the moment though, there wasn't a better alternative. The ministry was incompetent in almost its entirety and nobody other than Dumbledore stood up against the Dark Lord.

'The next Order meeting is scheduled for tomorrow evening. Maybe if I have more information about the situation I won't have to tell him. When I started as a cursebreaker I gave my loyalty to the goblins. They haven't led me astray until now. I think, I should talk to my boss about the issue with Dumbledore, if they aren't in league with You-know-who. If only there was a better option than Dumbledore. His obsession with Harry and his disregard for laws and human lives are slowly becoming a serious problem. I don't know how much longer I can condone his actions and have a part in them, if I want to be able to look into a mirror without cringing.'

His thoughts were cut short as he noticed one of the managers, who had walked up to the information terminal. After a bit of whispering the other goblin nodded and suddenly his voice was amplified.

"All Gringotts personnel is called to meet in one hours time. We will have to close the bank for a short period. I repeat, all Gringotts personnel including the non-goblin employees are called to meet in one hours time in the message room. I would like to apologize to our customers for the inconvenience."

'Well, it seems things are coming together. I wonder why they would

close the bank. It means a loss of business. What could be important enough for them to accept that? If they had allied themselves with You-know-who it wouldn't have caused such a reaction. After all, why would they ally themselves with someone who has only ever looked down upon them. In the last war they were negotiating an alliance with Dumbledore.'

Bill sighed. He would have to wait a while longer. Maybe he should speak with his boss right now, to get it out of the way. He would certainly feel better after that was out of the way.

Outside, Harry was deep in thought. He hadn't reckoned with so many things. The extent of Dumbledores betrayal was a good deal larger than he had thought. That he hadn't stolen anything was most likely due to the circumstances. That didn't even cover what he might have done in Harrys name if he went as far as to send a statement with a false signature to Gringotts.

'Not to forget the fact that I have never gotten a single letter apart from the ones from the ministry and my friends. Wouldn't some of my fans have written to me, or shouldn't I have gotten at least some hate-mail last summer? Aren't there any laws against what that old goat is doing? That's a serious offence he is committing. Just like the junk in the newspaper. Is there no law to stop them from violating my privacy and printing lies? I always thought that the muggle laws are in effect because they affect the whole country and additional magical ones are added for the other eventualities. Obviously I was wrong. I really need do something about that, in more than one way!'

Harry had slowly taken a few steps away from Gringotts. Now he took a look around and then made a beeline for Ollivanders. He really needed a wand holster. He suddenly felt even more endangered than before and wanted to have his wand at easy access all the time. He entered the darkened shop and closed the door behind himself. The atmosphere was still as creepy as before

first year. When the low voice of the old man greeted him from behind he almost jumped a foot.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Potter. What can I do for you on this fine day? I hope there is nothing wrong with your wand. Holly and phoenix feather, 11 inches, was it not?"

Taking a deep breath Harry turned around to look at Mr. Ollivander imploringly.

"Good afternoon. You startled me, Mr. Ollivander. My wand is perfectly okay. How did you know it was me? I know the disguise isn't much, but everyone else was fooled, even the goblins."

The old man stepped out of the shadow.

"It is a special talent I have, Mr. Potter. To know the identity of every person that enters my shop. Why are you here, Mr. Potter?"

He walked behind the counter as he spoke those words.

"I need a wand holster and thought that I would get the best quality here. And I need a way around the effect of brother wands, Mr. Ollivander. Otherwise I'll be dead the next time Voldemort and I meet."

"The question of a wand holster is easily solved, but you should know, Mr. Potter, that I can not sell another wand to you. It is against the law. Than there is also the small fact that you have tested out most of my wands and there isn't any other that has accepted you."

Ollivander had wandered into the backroom and brought out a selection of different wand holsters.

"Which one do you want? They are all charmed to be invisible as soon as they are put on, you can not be disarmed as long as your

wand is in it and it is protected against summoning charms. With a flick of your wrist it will shoot into your hand. These are made out of different kinds of dragonhide, apart from this black one. That one has been here for a long time because nobody wanted it. It is made out of basiliskhide, the only material even more impervious to magic than dragonhide."

Having thoroughly looked at the holsters Harry pointed at the black one.

"I'll take it, Mr. Ollivander. It is beautiful and of good quality. If people are too prejudiced that isn't my problem. And I didn't want to buy another wand. I wanted to know if it was possible to customize my wand in such a way that Voldemorts isn't counted as brother wand any more."

Startled, the old man looked at Harry.

"Customize the wand? That hasn't been done in a long time. I would most likely have to add another core or wood, but we would have to soak your wand in blood, venom or tears to change the core enough to cancel the brotherhood in each case."

He handed the holster to Harry who put it on instantly.

"That is an unusual and interesting idea you had. Come with me."

Ollivander took Harry into the backroom and through another door, after he had closed the shop to other customers.

"In here is my workshop, where I fashion wands. I also keep my working materials in here."

He pointed at a large selection of woods, liquids and cores that were carefully wrapped and bottled.

"I want you to take your wand out and hold out in front of you across your palm, parallel to the shelves. Look at each component and if you and your wand agree on one, you will feel a pull and your wand will move to point at what you selected. This way, we can be sure that your wand will accept the extra part. This may take quite some time."

Harry gave him a nod and began to walk along the shelves. It took him a bit over an hour to go through everything Mr. Ollivander had. He had selected a dark piece of wood, a strand of hair and a bottle of blood.

"What an unusual selection. With the holly wood and the phoenix feather I had thought the other materials would be a little more similar, from a unicorn or another phoenix. But obviously I was wrong. Maybe the connection to Tom Riddle and your defeat of him was what caused your wand to choose you. You grew up in the muggle world like him, unaware of your heritage. Now, that you are a bit older the differences between the two of you are a bit more prominent than yew and holly. You have a piece of cherry wood, the tail-hairs of a thestral and the blood of a chimera. Powerful in their own right, but combined with your wand... that will be a curious experience. I'll get my workspace ready for the fusion, after that we'll let your wand soak in the blood. That will take at least six hours. It will be half past eight this evening until you can come and collect it. I'm sorry, but there is no other way."

All the while freeing his workspace of clutter and tools, he set the protections up to allow no outside influence on wand and materials during the fusion.

"Mr. Ollivander?"

"Yes, my boy?"

"Will the enchantments on my wand interfere with the fusions? Or are

they deactivated because of it?"

"Enchantments, Mr. Potter? What are you talking about? The wands I sell do not have enchantments on them."

"They are relatively new, Mr. Ollivander. It's a family thing. Here, take a look."

Harry gave his wand to the old man, who squinted at it, before he put it into the middle of the protection field next to the cherry wood and the thestral tail-hairs.

"Those are interesting enchantments. And they are very useful. Nobody else will be able to use your wand. They will not interfere in the process or be damaged. Do you want to watch the fusion, Mr. Potter? Yes? Then stand back. Even with the protection this can be a bit of a fireworks."

Ollivander took out his own wand and began to chant. First the circle of runes began to glow. After that the wand, the wood and the core began to levitate and in a shower of multi-colored sparks they seemed to wind around each other until they fused together, emitting a warm blue glow. The finished wand levitated for moment longer, before it sank down onto the workspace again. Instead of taking the protection down, the old man fetched a steel basin and filled it with the blood, which was then levitated into the protection circle. Afterwards Harry's wand was levitated into the basin and left to soak.

"The soaking is complete the moment the blood has been completely absorbed into your wand, Mr. Potter. The only thing to do now is wait. I suppose you are coming back later?"

"Yes, Mr. Ollivander. I still have several things left to do before I have to go home. I'll see you in six hours."

By now the two men had reached the storefront and Ollivander let

Harry out of the shop.

'Now I feel even more paranoid than before. I don't even have my wand with me any more. But it can't be helped. I'll just have to endure it. Next stop, the trunk shop. I will need more room for everything if I extend my wardrobe. And for some of the muggle books, I really want to read some at Hogwarts. Leisure reading. Ron will have a fit.'

Harry wandered through Diagon Alley. Finally he decided on a shop. It was called 'Traveling and storing equipment' and had some interesting things located in the window. There were bags and suitcases, backpacks and tents, trunks and even a single camp bed. When he entered the shop a single bell-chime sounded and what appeared to be an employee came to greet him.

"What can I do for you, young man? My name is Edward Throckmorton, I'm the owner of this shop."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Throckmorton. I'm interested in a new backpack, mine is a bit threadbare already and I need a new trunk. My old one is simply not big enough to store all the things and schoolbooks I have accumulated. There is always a horrible mess in there, too. Potion ingredients between clothes, books and ink, you know. I'd like to acquire a multi-compartment trunk. I suppose you do have a selection of those?"

Harry looked questioningly at the older man.

"Yes, we do. If you'd follow me. There are several models available and each in a few different designs. The one that is the most simple is this. It has three different compartments, all enlarged to about three times the original space. The first compartment is done like a wardrobe, enough space for even a slightly bigger wardrobe than normal. The second compartment is already equipped with bookshelves and comes with a magical catalogue that tells you exactly which books are in there and where to look for them. You can

also label and shift the shelves around a bit. The third compartment is subdivided in one larger and two smaller part, ideal for storing gifts, sweets, potion equipment and other things. It has a lightweight charm and an auto levitation charm. It is available in oak, birch, and teak."

Having pointed at some simple trunks he led Harry to some that were a bit more elaborate.

"Those are the trunks we usually sell to older students. A bit more expensive than a normal school trunk but still available. Over here you can see trunks that are meant to last a while longer and are good for traveling. They have the same basic features bit the inside is enlarged to about five times of the original space and there is a fourth compartment with a few cupboards, a small stove and sink in there to enable you to cook for yourself if you want to. Built in lightweight an levitation charm, offered in oak, beech, cedar and pine. It is above the money range of a student though if parents don't help pay for it. There are some more models, like the auror-standard, but...."

Harry looked at him.

"Don't worry, Mr. Throckmorton, I can pay for it. I inherited some money and wanted to invest it in a trunk that is able to last me a lifetime if necessary. If I have to pay a bit more for good quality that is entirely understandable. A while ago I saw trunk with a room inside it, it belonged to one of my teachers. Do you maybe have some of those?"

There was a happy glint in the older mans eyes.

"Of course we do. It is good that you are looking for good quality. I'd be happy to show our more... elaborate...trunks to you. There is of course the auror-standard trunk which has a small chamber as fifth compartment, probably what you have seen?"

At Harry's nod he continued.

"Then there are trunks that were built for traveling in the less civilized regions of the world, they have a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen with eating corner. The wardrobe is linked to the first compartment, the bookshelves to the second, a storage cupboard to the third and the kitchen to the fourth. The fifth is the bedroom and bathroom. We have trunks with a sixth compartment, meant to be used as a workroom either for potions or dueling. Sometimes we get an order from one of the older families to change the first three compartments to a walk-in wardrobe, a library and extra storeroom. As we normally sell our trunks fully furnished, the price increases steadily for more compartments and the bigger they are. A customized luxury-trunk costs a small fortune. They have the same charms as all the trunks we sell. Lightweight, levitation, protection against fire and water as well as theft, anti-destruction charms and a shrinking feature. Every trunk is available in oak, beech, teak, cedar and pine. Now, I think you know exactly what you want. Which of these options is the most acceptable to you?"

Harry was stunned. The options were better than he had thought. But none of the options did exactly fit with his wishes, mostly because he didn't like the styles the trunks were done in. He thought for a while, before he asked:

"Would it be possible to customize a trunk for me? These options are good, but they aren't exactly what I want. Not the wood and not the overly luxurious style. Money isn't a problem, but other than the bathroom and kitchen I can furnish it myself, and I'd also like to have the rooms to my liking and not standardized."

The other man looked a bit shocked and scratched his head.

"Of course it is possible, but a custom trunk that is fully made anew and not based on one of the models we have is more expensive. On the other hand, if you don't want to have it fully furnished the price

should decrease quite a bit. You would only have to pay for the materials used as they are natural, as well as for the knowledge and the time we spend working on it. It would take some time, but you would indeed get exactly what you tell us to do with it, in material and looks as well as charms. Would you please accompany me to the workshop? We can finalize your wishes there and then I will begin. You have to realize that it will take some time to have it ready."

As they walked into the workshop, Harry mentally compared it to Ollivanders. While it was bigger, the general layout was the same. Samples of the woods that were used could be seen on the shelves, the same for the metals. A drawing board was standing in one of the corners next to a table that was covered with parchment. Mr. Throckmorton sat down and searched for a new parchment and some ink.

"Now, Mr. ..." He threw a questioning look at Harry.

"Partridge, sir."

"Mr. Partridge, please tell me exactly what outer materials you want me to use. After that the design you wish to have. Then you will tell me how many compartments you want and what features they should have. The inner materials come after that as well as the layout for the rooms. And finally the extra charm-work you want to have. Okay?"

Harry had to blink twice. What was it with people and bombarding him with information lately?

'And why the hell can't the old goat be that forthcoming with info that concerns me? If he would just tell me, instead of crawling into his overgrown beard and twinkling, so much could have been avoided.'

Absentminded he nodded to the carpenter.

"I want to have ebony for the trunk, with some cherry wood inlays and reinforced stainless steel for the edges and hinges. The inlays should be of some stylized Chinese dragons in the corners and a katana on the lid. I want to have six compartments. The first like you said a shortcut to a walk-in closet, the second to a library and the third to a storage room. The fourth to a living room with a separated kitchen, eating space and pantry, the fifth a bedroom with bathroom and the last a potions laboratory and dueling chamber. Apart from the kitchen, bathroom and workrooms I want to have wall-to-wall carpeting in light grey and blue. Grey for the library, the storeroom and the den, blue for the bedroom and the wardrobe. Polished granite floor in the kitchen, the workrooms and the bathroom. The walls and ceiling should be in beech and larch respectively. Cherry wood for the library and polished granite in the workrooms."

Harry paused for a moment and took a deep breath, before he continued.

"The kitchen cupboards in larch and the equipment in stainless steel. For the bathroom I'd like black marble for the sink and shower, as well as for a Jacuzzi. Fittings in stainless steel also and frosted glass for the shower. I'll properly enlarge the rooms myself, so just give me a standard size. Or maybe an enlargement feature? Most of the rooms should be connected, maybe through a portal. I'll need an additional connection possibility to the bathroom and none for the wardrobe, doors between the bedroom, bathroom and wardrobe as well as between the laboratory and the dueling room. Now for charm-work, I'd like your standard enchantments for the trunk and maybe a follow-me charm, for the rooms I'd like perpetual cleaning charms and an auto-repair charm, climate control and a warming charm for the floor. Are you able to use metal plates with my initials for locks, charmed to recognize my fingerprints and magical signature? And could I maybe buy some ebony, larch, beech and cherry wood planks from you? Oh, is there a possibility to add a temporary transformation feature to change it into a muggle suitcase with wheels for traveling in the muggle world without arousing

suspensions?"

The older man had written furiously while Harry talked. He was a bit surprised that the lad had such a clear picture of his future trunk before his mind's eye. And while there were some similarities to the standard trunks he sold, there were more than enough differences to show him why the lad had wanted a custom trunk. But a few things had him baffled. Why stainless steel? What was a Jacuzzi? How in Merlin's name had the lad come up with portals in the trunk and that absolutely safe locking system? And just why did he want wood planks? A change into a muggle suitcase?

"Okay, my boy. Most of this is easy to do and I have everything you said recorded. But why don't you want silver or gold for your trunk? Or at least copper or bronze? What exactly is that Jacuzzi you want? Yes, I can sell you the wood and I will also be able to charm some plates with your initials as locks for the compartments. But why such a security feature? And the transformation? I don't even know if such things have been done before."

"Well, the steel is durable and quite a bit harder than the other metals you asked me about, it can take more stress. Gold is also a bit too flashy for my tastes. A Jacuzzi is a muggle invention. It is a pool big enough for about five people to comfortably sit in with water jets in it. It is very good for cramped muscles and such. Simply a very pleasant affair. Hmm. I wonder, why you don't have such a thing in the wizarding world? I mean, there are tubs the size of small swimming pools and taps where you get bubble-bath or soap. So why not whirlpools? And the security? I know several people who are too nosy for their own good. I don't want people to have easy access to my trunk. Keys can be lost and passwords can be overheard. But you can't fake a magical signature. It's that simple. And we are living in dangerous times. For a Jacuzzi you may have to look through the catalogue of a muggle sanitary shop. The wood I need for the transfiguration of furniture and I'm a halfblood and live in the muggle world. The number of stares my trunk gets every year in the cab or at

the station is unbelievable."

Harry mentally did a checklist. Almost like an afterthought he added: "Oh, and my initials are H. A. J. C. E. P., you'll need them." The carpenter stared at him. "What were your parents thinking, my boy? Five names?"

"Not totally accurate. Four names. The fifth initial is from my mothers maiden name. They simply couldn't decide. How long do you think you will need to get it done, Mr. Throckmorton?" Scratching his head the older man answered Harry. "A good few hours. Luckily for you we don't have any pressing business right now. If you had come in four weeks that would have been different. Other students will crowd the Alley then. The usual school rush. Could you come back here at half past seven? Your trunk should be ready by then."

"That is good timing. I have another appointment at half past eight and should be done with my shopping then. Is it okay if I chose one of the backpacks in the front? I can either pay for it now or when I pay for the trunk, whatever is better for you." Harry had paused for a moment in the doorway. "Oh, take one. Put the tag on the counter. You can pay for it later. I'll get started on your trunk right away. See you."

"Bye, Mr. Throckmorton and thank you."

He only got a murmur in reply and wandered to the different backpacks. He selected one with a leather bottom and watertight cloth. It seemed to be a muggle adaptation, charmed to be light despite the contents. It also had an inside enlargement charm and an anti-wear-and-tear charm on. The tag read 20 galleons and Harry put it on the counter and left the shop, stowing his old satchel away in the new backpack. He looked around for a moment and decided to buy clothes first.

'If I have the clothes out of the way there will be more time for books

and other odds and ends. Knockturn Alley, here I come. I just hope that the shop the twins told me about is really that good. Muggle and wizarding clothing in best quality? At least it will spare me the muggle shops. It will be awful enough to find a really good electronics store.'

Humming to himself Harry wandered down to the entrance of Knockturn Alley. He eyed the different stores as he walked. Most of them were shops a bit more specialized and smaller than those in Diagon. There was a shop with music instruments and an optician, a few shops specialized in working equipment for different jobs, a second hand bookstore and another apothecary that interestingly enough looked a lot cleaner than the one in Diagon Alley. He had reached the clothing store and took a last look towards the end of Knockturn Alley. The more distant the shops were to the entrance the more run-down and dark they seemed. He shook his head when he remembered the summer before second year. Sure, he had been a bit farther down the Alley, but the fear he had felt... But if Hagrid hadn't come he would have looked around a bit more, despite that uneasy feeling.

As he entered the shop he was a bit surprised. The color of Fred and Georges coats had left him shuddering and he had hoped that it wasn't a trademark. He looked around and the shop clearly divided into wizarding wear and muggle clothes. But the quality left him breathless. There was everything the heart of a teenager could ever want and the grown-up section was just as large. Harry began to collect some jeans as he wandered down the aisle. The fact that he had to try everything on was a bit daunting but if he wanted fitting clothing he had to put up with it. Several in different shades of blue, two black, two beige and a dark green one and he continued on to button-up shirts.

'Hmm. Silk shirts. Shall I spoil myself a bit? Ah. What's this? No, no embroidery on these. Black, white, dark grey, dark green and this one in blood red? That should suffice. Hmm. I better try them on now, before the pile gets any bigger.'

He walked towards a changing room.

'I do have a good eye. They fit just the way I like it. Now to bring them up to the counter, have them billed and packed and continue on. I still need some pants, t-shirts, muscle shirts, underwear and shoes. Maybe some sweats and trainers? That should do nicely. The slogans and patterns on those t-shirts are quiet good. I wonder if they would piss those uptight Order members of? Probably. Hey! Are those Asian silk trousers? I simply have to get some of those.'

He wandered of again while the blond haired girl at the counter rang his purchases up. It was about an hour later when he was finished in the muggle section, putting several pairs of socks, two pairs of trainers and a pair of dress shoes on the counter.

"Are you finished now, or do you want something out of the magical wear section also? 'Cause if you do, it might still be easier to pay for these first. I'm running out of storage space and if I shrink your bags now without you storing them away they might get lost."

"Hmm? Oh, that's fine. You're right, I'll just pay for these now. Thank you."

The price came up to several hundred galleons. If he had tried this in the muggle world, he would have paid a good deal more and that did take into consideration the conversion of his money.

"That's quiet some amount of clothes. Are you buying a whole new wardrobe? Oh, I forgot to tell you something. There are some inactive charms on those clothes. They activate as soon as you leave the shop. The material was made more durable and can accommodate up to one foot of growth. If you don't grow too much you won't have to buy clothes again anytime soon. There are also some dirt repelling charms on them. My friend over in the magical section does the measuring for robes. You'll have to go around the

corner over there. I hope you find something you like. You just have to touch the bags with your wand to enlarge them. No active magic on your part."

She smiled friendly at him and gave him his shrunken shopping bags. But Harry had to wonder what it would have been like if he had come in as Harry Potter.

"Thanks."

As he walked to the back of the magical section he studied the different styles of robes and dress robes. As he had always had a thing for Asian culture and language, the Asian style robes were the most appealing to him. But he knew he had to get some normal robes for school.

"Hey there. Are you just looking around or do you need to be measured?"

The one to ask that question was a dark haired girl about his own age. As he took a closer look, he had to bite back a scream. It was Padma Patil, the twin sister of Parvati, the biggest gossip in Gryffindor. Thankfully the Ravenclaw didn't really know him. Otherwise she could maybe have seen through his disguise. Harry had taken the charm off of his hair as soon as he had entered the shop. With reddish blond hair he wasn't recognizable, but he also wouldn't get clothes that really looked good on him.

"Yes, I need to be measured. I have recently outgrown my old robes and dress robes."

"Okay, could you come over here and stand on this platform? It'll only be a moment, your measured automatically. Do you know what colors, styles and fabrics you want?"

She directed Harry over to the corner where several small platforms

were.

"Mmhmm. I want several standard black robes like the one I'm wearing, in cotton and silk. I'd also like some sturdier work robes out of a light grey cloth, for potions and such, you know. Everyday robes in Asian style in black, blood red, dark green, dark blue, dark grey and light grey. I don't have the complexion to wear too much of a lighter color, so no white or the likes. A bit of embroidery like kanji or stylized animals around the hems is okay. And I want them with and without sleeves, two of each but with different embroidery if any and made of silk. Then I need at least two sets of formal robes and two dress robes, those also in Asian style, please. Maybe you could decide what would look good?"

He was for one of the first times happy for his slight stature, because it was suited for the Asian style robes. Someone like Ron wouldn't be able to pull that feat off. Padma just stared at him.

"So you do know what you want. We rarely get customers that know with such a certainty what they want. And if they do, most of the time it doesn't even look good on them. That are mostly males though. I'll just fetch some robes for you to look at. If you like the design I'll simply have the others made with your directions. After that we can take a look at some dress robes, okay?"

When he nodded, she marched off, only to bring back a pile of robes with different images on them.

"Would you like some of your robes with a bigger picture on the back? I have a catalogue here where you could select some. Yes? Good. Now, have a look at these, please. Okay, so you like this and this. These three too? Very well. How about this? No? Shame. Five different motives for embroidery. That'll leave some of your robes plain. Take a look at the catalogue while I bring some dress robes and tell the seamstress to make your robes. I'll be right back."

'She's a right busybody. Her sister is like that, but I always got the impression that she was quieter.'

Harry looked at the pictures in the catalogue. He found a stylized phoenix, dragon and tiger that were beautiful in his opinion and decided to add them to some of his robes. He had reached the very back of the catalogue when he found one final picture. It was a dark unicorn with its wings spread in flight. The image shook him up a bit and he couldn't imagine why. But the animal seemed frightfully familiar. He showed the pictures to Padma as soon as she came back and she left him looking at the models of some dress robes while she brought the picture to the seamstress. He decided on a emerald green dress robe with a fire like motive at the hems and collar and on an elaborate grey dress robe. He reasoned that one: he looked good in grey and two: he wanted to honor the family crest.

Harry gave the robes to Padma to have them made in his size and added to his purchases. She then asked him about the formal robes.

"Do you want normal ones or the slightly more expensive ones? The difference is that the later have a charm on them that transforms them into robes with your family crest and the insignia of your rank within your family, like if you are the heir or the head of the family, when you put them on. The normal ones only have the crest embroidered. The difference is quiet visible and the normal ones are looked down upon slightly."

"I'll take the charmed model. They would change in accordance to my change of status, would they not?"

"Yes. Okay, then I'll tell the seamstress to make two charmed formal robes. You'll have to wait a few minutes until everything is ready. I hope that doesn't inconvenience you?"

Padma had slightly uneasy expression on her face and Harry had to reassure her.

"Don't worry. I wanted to look at those dragonhide trousers and boots over there anyhow. Will you bring everything up to the counter?"

She nodded and then walked off once again to find the seamstress. Meanwhile, Harry wandered over to the dragonhide trousers and looked through them. They seemed to be skintight and he'd like to feel that after all the years of wearing Dudley's cast-offs. So he selected a black one. Just as he was about to leave he noticed another one: it was blood red, probably made of the hide of a Chinese Fireball. He stared at it and when he couldn't resist anymore he grabbed it. Luckily it was his size. Grabbing a pair of boots he made his way to a changing room to try them on. They fit like a second skin. He shimmied out of them and redressed. Then he walked up to the counter and had them added to the rest of his clothes from the magical section.

"Are the rest of my clothes ready?" he asked the blond girl.

"No, sorry. It'll take another moment. Do you want to pay now, or do you want to wait?"

"I'll pay now."

She nodded and added everything together. The bill came to several hundred galleons again. He stowed the shrunken bags away and waited for five minutes for the rest of his robes and left the shop immediately afterward, charming his hair reddish blond again.

It had been around 3 am when he left the carpenter's shop, now it was half past four and he still had a few hours left. Deciding to get the sixth and seventh year potions kit along with two extra ingredients packs first he steered towards the apothecary. Upon entering the shop he decided to never again frequent the one in Diagon Alley. Everything in here was spotless and the smell wasn't nearly as bad. The ingredients and equipment were sorted orderly on the shelves in

spotless containers. Harry walked up to the counter and asked for the kit and the extra packs. While the clerk fetched what he wanted, he went and collected two bronze and one silver cauldron, a new set of scales as well as some new cutting tools and an owl order catalogue he noticed on the counter. All in all that stop hadn't even taken 15 minutes 'til he walked out with his shrunken purchases.

As the optician was right next door he entered the shop and looked around. There were some very obscure models of glasses but also some modern ones.

"Good afternoon, young man. What can I do for you today?"

The voice came from directly behind him and had him jumping almost a whole foot into the air. Shakily he let his breath out once he had caught it.

"Are you perhaps related to Mr. Ollivander, sir? He always does the very same thing to me you just did. And I would like to inquire about the options of corrective eyewear the magical world offers."

Laughing a bit the man replied: "You are quiet right, Mr. Potter. Oh, don't flinch. I have the same gift as my grandfather. And no, I won't tell anyone that you were here today. Now, you don't seem to have any problems with your sight."

Harry had fought the sneer that his lips wanted to form.

"I used a temporary sight correction spell this morning. My glasses are a bit too well known. I would have been recognized everywhere."

"Ah. That makes sense. We have several different models of glasses as you can no doubt see and I can also offer you magical contact lenses. They are a bit more advanced than the muggle versions. Unfortunately there is no potion or charm to correct eyesight permanently. Do you want to know a bit more?"

When Harry nodded he continued: "Our glasses and contact lenses automatically change to make your vision perfect, meaning they change descriptions with your eyes. The contact lenses are a permanent feature, you don't have to take them out again. But it is possible to do so. They have some charms on them to hold themselves and your eyes in the best of conditions, as not to develop an itch. They also protect your eyes from some vision affecting charms and can have the additional features of night vision and instant eye color change. Then there are some options normally only available for MLE employees. Seeing through invisibility charms and cloaks, x-ray and infrared vision. I would offer you the first and the last. The enchantments can of course also be placed on glasses."

Harry thought about it for a moment.

'My glasses have been broken more times than I would want to remember. Even if the new glasses were charmed unbreakable they can be summoned by an enemy or simply fall off. I always wished I could get rid of them.'

He nodded once and addressed the other man.

"I'll take the contact lenses, please. With all four features. Glasses are a weakness at the moment that I simply can't afford."

"Very well. But I have to warn you: they sort of fuse with your eyes and that hurts a good deal. Could you please take the correction and the color changing charm of? Now, I fetched the lenses you want. I'll put them in. Just a moment. Okay." And then Harry felt as if his eyes were burned out with a hot poker. He clenched his teeth and managed - barely - not to scream. He opened his eyes when the pain subsided and where before had been a blurry world everything was clearly distinguished now. He walked to a mirror and concentrated on changing his eye color. First they went blue, then black, then hazel – just like he had wanted. The voice of the optician reminded him that

he wasn't alone.

"The other features are activated in the same way. You'll have to practice for a while until you get it fully under control. You should try not to look directly into bright light for a few days. That'll be 134 galleons, please."

"That much?"

"Yes. You need to remember that these are permanent and have some extra charm-work."

"Very well. 134 galleons, here you are, sir. I wish you a good day."

"You too, Mr. Potter, you too."

Heaving a deep sigh, Harry leant against the wall of building.

'I seem to do that quiet often today. Those surprises are getting a little bit troublesome. Every other shop there is one waiting for me and I still have some shopping to do. I could die of heart failure at this rate. Hopefully nothing else will happen. Now, let's see. Where's my shopping list? Okay. See family vault – check. Buy wand-holster – check. Change wand – check. Buy muggle clothes – check. Buy wizard clothes – check. Buy potions equipment – check. Buy ingredients – check. Buy backpack – check. Buy trunk – check. Buy glasses or contact lenses – check. Left are the books, instruments, electronics, parchment and ink and the look at 'Odds and Ends'. For the last two I'll have to go back to Diagon Alley. The electronics are left to the end of my shopping trip in the muggle world. Or not. Most muggle shops close at 8 pm, do they not? I'll check out the music shop first, then I'll go to the secondhand bookshop. I should be able to find a lot of interesting things there. Afterwards I'll go back to muggle London. Maybe eat something before that. Mmhmm.'

And he strolled to the music shop, backpack firmly held over his

shoulder.

'All those piano and flute lessons in elementary school won't be wasted. I'll have to dedicate a room to music at home. I have enough space. Hmm. Feels nice to finally think of Privet Drive as home.'

In the end Harry bought a magically enhanced piano, a flute and pan pipes. Not to forget the sheets of music that found their way to him that couldn't be found in the muggle world. He took out his list and looked at it. He had borrowed a quill from the salesclerk and added a note to go to a muggle music store. Now that he was ready to go shopping for books he took out the booklist and skipped happily over to the bookstore which was named 'Ciel - secondhand books for interested people'. All the while completely ignoring the odd looks he was getting from the other people in Knockturn Alley for his behavior. It wasn't everyday you saw someone expressing such a positive emotion in the 'dark' shopping district.

The inside of the bookstore was a bit different than Harry had expected. There was a secondhand department all right. But most of the shop seemed dedicated to really old books, most likely from the sales of a family library and the likes. The tomes were at least a hundred years old. He suddenly thought of Hermione and had to wonder if she knew about this store. Probably not, as it was down Knockturn Alley. Stars began to shine in his eyes as he looked around. Now he could finally let go of his repressed love for books and went browsing with a large grin on his face.

The old witch at the counter had at first wanted to sent the young man right back out. But the look of awe that slowly fixed itself onto his face had prevented her from that. Now she watched with a soft smile on her face as he went through shelf after shelf of books, stacking them up at the end of each shelf, finally stumbling towards her counter several times. He grinned at her and went right back to the shelves he hadn't looked at yet.

She had to shake her head at his behavior and began to ring the books up. He didn't seem to mind that in the end there would be a quiet large amount of money to pay, even with the low prices she had. Silently she took notice of the different topics the books covered. From defense over potions to astronomy, from charms and transfiguration over runes to wards, several old law books, books on foreign magic, books on history and herbology, ancient magics, there didn't seem to be a topic he shied away from. He had even selected a few of the better Dark Arts books that were disguised as defense books, meaning the defense was explained but the real intent of the book was focused on the curses.

In the end he had selected and paid for over 200 books and by now she could safely say that he was certainly not narrow-minded. But he had shied away from one topic despite her earlier thoughts: he had not brought one single book about black magic to the counter. He had seen them, had felt them she knew. But not once had he even touched one of those books. There weren't many and she didn't like selling them, but often she didn't have a choice. She couldn't destroy them and if she sent them to the ministry they would find their way to wizards like the current Dark Lord.

"Ma'am?"

She looked up into his eyes. "Yes, sonny? Is there anything else you wanted?"

He only raised an eyebrow at the pet name she had called him. "The books with the wards around them..."

"What about them, sonny?"

"Would you like help in destroying them? I'm normally not one to destroy knowledge, but... those books aren't only dark. They seem to truly radiate evil. I can feel it even through those wards. They shouldn't exist. Merlin forbid someone read them. And the wards are

strong. They scream of your intent to have them banished from the world."

"Would you really do that, sonny? I'm not powerful enough to destroy them alone. Let me just pack and shrink those books for you. You really love books, sonny, don't you?"

"Yes, Ma'am. But I suppressed my love for them because everybody just ignored the real me and I foolishly tried to match the image. There will be some people in for quite a nasty shock."

He smiled, mischief dancing in his eyes as he stashed the boxes full of shrunken books in his backpack.

"You only need my power to do that, don't you? I mean..."

"Yes, sonny. Now watch closely, so you can do it alone later on. This is old, almost forgotten magic."

She drew her wand and began to draw several runes on a silver tray she had produced from under the counter. Glowing shapes came into being and Harry could feel the good intent of the magic, the will to ward off and destroy evil. A circle in a Pentacle in a pentagon. Now there was a protective dome around the tray and she levitated one of the books complete with wards inside the dome.

"Now sonny, I want you to focus on everything good inside you and take it to power the most powerful incendio you can manage. The dome sees to it that the fire and the good intention are the only thing you need to destroy the evil. But you need to be able to overpower it. Do it, sonny."

Noticing he didn't have a wand with him she handed hers to him.

"Incendio."

He watched as the flames began to lick at the cover. The book seemed to fight the burning heat. But ever so slowly it began to catch fire and burned faster and faster. Not even ashes were left in the end. He slumped over and put her wand in the counter. So much power!

"I can't do that very often. This has drained me something terrible."

"I know, sonny. But, this was the most powerful book I had. The others don't come close. I wasn't even sure if it was possible to destroy it. Thank you. I have one other book for you. The casting of runes like I did just now is a lost art, sonny. Runes are nowadays used in magical theory and as language, but the art of real rune magic has been supposedly lost for centuries. The secret is in this book. I want you to have it, sonny. I know that you won't abuse the power you will gain through it. The only thing you have to promise me, is to come back and help destroy the other books."

"I would come back either way. You have too much interesting books not to. But I promise you. I will come back and destroy the other books on black magic. An 'art' that shouldn't have been invented. But Ma'am? I've seen runes being used. How does that..."

"Ah, sonny, you saw the activation of runic enchantments of old, not the actual casting. Runes are everywhere. Few can rightly interpret them, but even fewer can see them in our environment. Those that can are the people with a talent for runic magic. Maybe you can bring it back into our world. Sonny. Tell me your name."

He looked up, startled. "My name? I don't even know my full name. But the world knows me as Harry Potter."

She could see the fire burning in his eyes through his disguise. Death had touched him and tainted his soul with the dark. But he was of a pure heart and he would never succumb to evil. He could understand the dark, the shadows, was sometimes even a part of them, but evil could never claim him. A fallen angel, a dark unicorn. And she knew

all of a sudden that he would change the world around him. He would no longer allow it to rot. He would make them understand. And nobody would be able to stop him. Her hope long dead was restored to a new life. She watched with a smile as he walked out of her shop, head held high.

'Why the bloody hell does it always happen to me? Do I have a sign over my head, telling people to spring the most unlikely surprises and situations ever on me? How bloody likely is it for a Dark Lord to decide to kill a baby? What is the probability of said baby surviving, time and again? To be the first human in centuries to have a share in goblin business? To find my school mate of a Ravenclaw wallflower in Knockturn Alley selling clothes of all things? Now this business of wiping out the knowledge of black magic with runic magic. Why can't the world leave me the fucking hell alone? What have I ever done to them?'

A pebble was kicked out of the way.

'Why do other people always think that my life is theirs to play with? Not I wouldn't take a stand against evil, but... why do they come running?'

Harry managed to calm down a little as soon as he felt the telltale crackle of his magic in the air.

'I won't ever get an answer to that question. But maybe I can change it enough that every person will take a stand all of their own and heroes aren't needed any more. Bah, who am I kidding? Me? Change the world? I can congratulate myself on a job well done if I survive Voldie.'

As he reached the entrance to Diagon Alley he finally lowered his gait from an angry run to a walk.

In the early afternoon some clouds had taken to crossing the sky and at the moment he felt like the sun would never shine for him again, despite his nose being tickled by her rays. Harry heaved another sigh.

'Oh well. I can't change the past. But I can at least have a say in my own future. I'm not their little puppet or scapegoat anymore.'

His feet took him past the ice cream parlor back to the Leaky Cauldron. He was ravenous, as he hadn't had a bite to eat since breakfast. But at the thought of the meals available at the pub he marched on to the door into muggle London pausing a moment to shed his robe. He would find himself some take away and eat on a bench in a park. Most likely pizza, it was easiest to eat. A grin formed on his face.

'I haven't had pizza in a long time and back then I only got a single slice. The thought alone makes me even more hungry. Wonder if I can convince the house-elves back at Hogwarts to make me some?'

A slight bounce was added to his step at the very thought of the look on Malfoys face at being presented with a muggle dish.

Harry had asked a boy his age were he could get the best pizza in walking distance and which was the best store for electronics. He had to make a slight detour to get his food, but it was well worth it. The taste was delicious and his hunger was sated. He never knew just how much different things one could put on a pizza and still have it taste good. That had given him the idea to make himself some covered with everything he liked. He would have to buy a cooking book for that as he had never made it before. The Dursleys had always order it at a pizza service. Licking his fingers clean he threw the box away in the nearest dustbin and made his way towards the electronics store.

He wanted to get a top of the line laptop and stereo system. Maybe

he could get them to run off of magic, as electricity malfunctioned in any environment that was heavily saturated with magic. Energy was energy, right? Other things he had at home, mostly even double because Dudley had thrown his fits every other days and wrecked something or other. On the way back to the Cauldron he would hit a music store if couldn't find anything to his liking in the electronics shop. His tastes in music had always been a bit odd. He could appreciate classic, but otherwise liked hard rock and heavy metal with a bit of new age and trance thrown in between. He didn't get to listen to music often but had made a point in remembering every band and song he had liked. His aunt and uncle would have never bought their darling son CDs from a band like Apocalyptica, Hammerfall, Nightwish or Linkin Park.

Three quarters of an hour later he had what he wanted and was on his way back, lugging two boxes around with him. Without his wand he hadn't even been able to cast a lightweight charm on them. His backpack was filled with CDs and some movie DVDs. He had always wanted to watch Star Wars and the Lord of the Rings. The salesclerk had been a tad bit surprised by his requests. A scrutinizing look at his ID and credit card later he had transformed into a bootlicking puddle. Harry absolutely hated it when people took him for no older than 12 at the most. He had to change that this summer. A nice tan, some muscles and hopefully - with a decent amount of food - he would grow a few inches. Of course he would never be as big as Ron, but a couple of inches would be really nice. He entered the Cauldron for the second time that day and looked around for Tom, the bar keeper. His boxes were put on the counter as he signaled the toothless older man over.

"Hello Tom. Could you maybe shrink these two packages for me, so that I only have to touch them with my wand when I get home? I'm not allowed to do it myself, as you know. I'm growing a bit tired because they are quiet heavy."

"Sure I will, young man. Anything for such a polite young man."

Minimus. Here you are. Do you want anything else, lad? Something to eat or drink?"

"No, thank you, Tom. I just ate in muggle London. But would you sell me a case or two of butterbeer? I like the stuff and we normally don't have it at home. Only muggle soft drinks and juice."

"Of course, young man. I'll get some for you. Anything else?"

"Well... maybe. My family and I recently moved to the welsh coast. I'm only here because school let out yesterday and I took a hotel room over the night. We don't have floo because we live in a muggle neighborhood and I wondered if there were other shopping districts apart from Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, maybe a bit nearer to home if I need some books or potion ingredients. Or even a point to floo from because the knight bus makes me sick. Do you know that or were I might find the information?"

Harry absentmindedly put his robe back on and continued to look at the bar keeper. Tom tapped his chin with his index finger.

"Well normally there aren't many magical shopping districts in a country. It isn't necessary because you can access the few in a matter of moments if you apparate or floo. The knight bus is good for emergencies but otherwise hideous. But you should find a list of every strictly magical village, every shopping area and public floo point along with a map of them in a book at 'Flourish and Blotts'. It is self updating because the shops and floo addresses change every so often. I don't know which section, you will have to ask. It may seem a bit much, but on the other hand you never know when you are visiting a foreign country and may need to go to the local magical village."

"Thanks, Tom. That is exactly what I need. Could you shrink the butterbeer also? I'll see you later when I go back to the hotel. My father is picking me up after work today. Bye."

"Good bye, lad. Don't go down into Knockturn Alley. It's more dangerous in there lately in the evening."

Harry just nodded and walked out towards Diagon Alley.

'Should I feel bad because I lied to those people today? But telling them the truth was totally out of question. The old goat would have been here in a second. Those that know can be trusted not to tell him. How I know that about the old witch in the bookstore in Knockturn I don't know.'

He nipped into the shop called simply 'Writing Implements' to buy new scrolls of parchment and a assortment of ink which he planned to use mostly with his muggle pens. As soon as he entered the biggest bookstore in the Alleys he grabbed a shopping basket. They had featherlight and enlargement charms on them and Harry began to scour one shelf after the other. From every topic he selected beginner, intermediate and advanced material as well as the available school texts if he didn't have them already. A text on job options and requirements wandered into the basket as well as books about ministry restrictions, laws and guidelines. Hermiones favorite books Hogwarts: a history and The History of magic went in along with a book about household charms and some about indoor decoration and gardening. At last he visited the section of rare books and found a few that he hadn't already bought at Ciel's. He had more then 350 books in his basket.

The eyes of the young man at the cash register nearly popped out at the amount of books he took out of the basket. Simon, as his name tag told Harry, was very helpful as he asked for the book Tom had told him of. The newest edition of it was together with an owl order catalogue the last book to be added to his bill. Simon had called one of the other assistants and sent him to fetch some boxes and piled Harry's books inside. A shrinking charm was applied and Simon nearly fainted at the total of more than 1000 galleons he had to pay

for the books. Harry didn't even blink an eye. He had known from the beginning that this would cost him more money than anything else. Books weren't as cheap as in the muggle world and he needed a lot of them. On the other hand – even in the muggle world the really old books were quite expensive. He had been quiet surprised at the section dedicated to muggle books he had found. It was quiet fortunate too, because he didn't have the time to visit a muggle bookstore today. But he could always use the internet and order what he wanted.

He had just stepped out of the into the street when he heard the bells of the Tower chime half past seven out over London. Now he had to hurry to the carpenter to collect his trunk.

'It'll take some time to examine every feature. The locks need to be keyed to my magical signature and than there are still a few other things left,' Harry mused on his way.

It was still a few hours 'til sunset as it was only a few days after the summer equinox. But he needed to be home a bit after 9:30 pm. Ample time if nothing disrupted his plans. You never knew. He opened the door to the shop and stepped inside, to be welcomed warmly by the owner.

"There you are, Mr. Partridge. Your trunk is ready, we only need to assure that everything is to your liking. Would you follow me to my workshop again? I didn't want to bring your trunk out to the front."

The trunk caught his eyes as soon as Harry walked into the room. He stared at it, his breath repeatedly catching in his throat. It was beautiful. The ebony gleamed in the sparse sunrays falling through the window as it hovered about half an inch of the ground, while the cherry wood inlays seemed like freshly shed blood. They had been polished in a certain way to give off exactly that impression. He heard the carpenters voice only through a haze.

"I used some silvery bark of a birch for the katana to make it more lifelike. I hope you don't mind? The whole trunk is charmed as to not allow scratches to the wood. All charms you wanted are on it, as well as a few extra protection charms I added. This trunk is a masterpiece."

Harry just nodded. He was too awed to speak at the moment.

"Now, please put your fingers on the plates with your initials. Best you use all ten fingers, one after another, for every plate. Your magical signature is recorded right alongside your fingerprints. Here. In this booklet you can find the procedures to add and remove someone from access to your trunk. The charms I used are recorded in there also. You should put it in your trunk later on for safekeeping. Now, are you ready to enter? The fourth compartment is the only one you can directly enter. I took the liberty to connect the fifth compartment to a cabinet and a hamper in your bathroom. In the sixth you will find a weapons rack from the dueling chamber. If you want to change that look through the booklet. The instructions are in there also. You will need them to put a shelf from the laboratory into the other part of the sixth compartment. The same goes for the library. I hope all is to your satisfaction this far? Then let's go inside. Just put your finger on the plate."

The sensation was not unlike that of a portkey, but a lot smoother and you could feel the soft pull on your whole body. Harry had expected a set of stairs or a ladder, but this was better. Inside he found a bare room fitted after his instructions. On one end there was a doorway leading to the kitchen and of to the side in a wall was a shimmering blue portal.

"You need to say your destination like 'library' or 'bathroom' before you go through the portal. It is charmed to recognize magical signatures. You can key people only to a certain room if you want to and the portal won't let them through if they aren't keyed in. If you want to get out, only say 'outside' before you step through. The

wooden planks you wanted are in the dueling chamber. Take a look around and then tell me what you think."

Harry left with a nod in his direction. He found everything almost exactly like his imagination had played it out. Apart from the size of the rooms that is. They were all rectangular like his trunk, but needed to still be enlarged, just as he had told the man. He also found that he could access the kitchen via portal, one way only. He came out in the doorway between kitchen and pantry. He had a large grin on his face as he walked back into the den.

"This is excellent. It is exactly as I wanted it. You did a very good job. Thank you. If my friends ever need a new trunk I'll tell them to come to you, Mr. Throckmorton."

"That's my job, young man. Now, there are a few things you need to know. The climate is controlled over a panel situated in the kitchen, you can set a different temperature and humidity for each room. If there is a doorway in the room there is a charm on it as to not allow any air exchanges and it is charmed to be always fresh. It also holds odors and noises in the rooms they were created in. The water tank is located under the floor of the bathroom. It has an auto-repair feature and an extra section for waste water. The waste water is automatically cleaned before it rejoins the rest. The quality is that of drinking water and it won't go stale or double as home for bacteria. I have to tell you though: when I went to get your Jacuzzi and an expert explained it to me, I also got one for my family. So, you do like your trunk?"

"It's fantastic, Mr. Throckmorton. But I think we need to get out. I have an appointment at half past eight and that is only ten minutes away. And I still need to pay for the trunk and my new backpack."

Just as before Harry managed to stay on his feet after the transport. When he began to walk out towards the front of the shop the trunk followed him like a faithful dog. It extracted a chuckle out of him.

"What kind of shrinking charm did you put on it? And were you able to pull the temporary transformation into a muggle suitcase of?"

Laughter answered him.

"Yes, I was. It was never necessary before, but it is a good idea. I think I'll put it into my normal offer for charms. There should be several muggleborns and halfbloods that will appreciate it. The shrinking feature, now that is something special. If you push the katana on the lid and think of shrinking your trunk, it will do just that. Your magical signature and the intent to shrink it is needed for this. That also prevents an accidental size decrease. Same goes for the other way round. Your trunk will shrink down to the size of a matchbox. You can easily put it in your pant pocket. There will also be a keychain attached to it, to secure it to a belt loop, if it is shrunken. If you want it to stay at a designated place, you just have to touch the katana and say 'stasis' and to have it follow you again say 'end stasis'. If you want it to transform into a wheeled muggle suitcase touch the katana and say 'muggle style'. To transform it back say 'normal style', you'll find the katana on the button for extending the pulling grip. You will find the contents of the first compartment in it. Access to the others isn't possible in this shape. I'm quiet proud of myself that I managed to get it right."

"As you should, Mr. Throckmorton, as you should. You put a lot of work in fulfilling my wishes. Now, what do I owe you for the trunk and backpack?"

"Well the backpack is 20 galleons, together that makes 1.678 galleons. With furniture that price could have easily been doubled, maybe even tripled. That varies with the luxury you want."

"1.678 galleons."

Harry just emptied his charmed moneybag onto the counter as it was

easier that way. He smiled as he carefully emptied his backpack into the third compartment. He only took his cloak out of his old satchel. Then he touched the katana and his trunk was shrunken to matchbox size. He secured it and slid it into his pocket.

"I wish a good evening, Mr. Throckmorton. I hope we do business again some day."

"Likewise, Mr. Partridge. There is one other thing I wanted to tell you. To my knowledge, nobody ever came up with your particular idea of a security locking system. Sure, there are some wards that work on the same basic principal, but those can be broken. I would advise you to go to the ministry and make a patent out of it. You could make a good deal of money with that."

"Mr. Throckmorton, you were the one to put my ideas into action. Shouldn't you be the one to do that?"

"It was your idea. But maybe you could get me a discount on it?"

"Will do. Thank you again, Mr. Throckmorton. You are a very honorable man. I like that. Good bye."

Once again on the street, Harry shook his head. A patent? It seemed like the whole world had decided to go barmy on him this day. He quickly began to move. He was already late for his meeting with Ollivander and his wand. And he itched to get his hands on his wand. He had never before realized just how much of a part of him it was. He knew, it wasn't good to solely depend on his wand, but he wanted to have it near him again. His magic always reacted with a warm buzz to a skin-on-wood contact. Hastily he entered the wand shop. A few feet into the room he whirled around, staring straight into the eyes of Mr. Ollivander.

"Impressive, Mr. Potter. Not even Dumbledore manages to catch me before or in the act. Or are you, maybe, just a bit jumpy?"

Harry sighed.

"Like a long tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. And I have come to expect it. Therefore I reacted before you managed to shock the hell out of me. Is my wand ready, Mr. Ollivander?"

Harry bounced on the balls of his feet like a little kid. He was terribly exited. The older man chuckled a bit.

"Did you meet my grandson, Harry Potter? You did. That little flinch tells the truth. Your wand hadn't finished its soak when I looked the last time. But that was half an hour ago. We shall go have a look, yes?"

Another chuckle followed the first as he led the way. The came into the workroom as Harrys wand soaked up the last drop of the chimera blood. It began to glow in a dark blue color, interspersed with lighter blue, green and a silvery grey as it levitated in the air in the middle of the protection dome. Then the dome simply vanished into thin air. Harry threw a look at Ollivander and, at his nod, grabbed hold of his wand. A tingle ran through his whole body and when he swished it the multicolored sparks formed the shape of chimera in the air. The wand seemed to vibrate with power and Harry felt like coming home. The feeling was a lot better than in the summer before first year when he had bought it. The wood had change its color and grain. The holly had darkened a bit and the cherry wood could be seen spiraling around from handle to tip, wound around one another and fused. Simply beautiful. As he channeled a bit of his magic through it he could feel the difference. The core had been changed irreparably. It accepted and amplified his magic better now. He slipped it into his wand holster.

"How much do I owe you, Mr. Ollivander? My wand has never before felt so in tune with my magic. It will be so much easier now to properly learn new spells. I hadn't realized it before, but it almost

seemed as if I was held back and blocked by my wandcore. It is a wonderful feeling now."

"I could feel it. Maybe I should get the students to come back after fifth year and have their wands customized. With the maturing of their character and magic it would open the way for a better performance in their NEWT years. The custom had been almost forgotten. That will be 23 galleons, Mr. Potter. I hope you will take pleasure in your new wand."

"I will. Don't worry. Mr. Ollivander, there was a question I had wanted to ask you. I concerns the detection of underage magic. I noticed recently, that I only got a letter from the ministry for the Patronus I cast last summer. I also cast a wandless lumos on my wand, but that wasn't mentioned. I never got a letter for blowing up my Aunt with accidental magic or before Hogwarts for everything that happened. On the other hand I got a letter for a levitation charm a house-elf did at my home. Can the detection globes the ministry has only identify wand magic as underage magic? Does the rest simply pass as uncontrolled magical outburst fueled by emotions? And can the magic of magical creatures or beings near a person be detected as use of a wand because of the core?"

"Quiet some questions. The answer to all of them is yes. But in the last case it has to be the intent of the creature, because it has to make a connection to your magic to get this reaction."

"That was all I wanted to know, thanks. I need to go now, otherwise I'll be late. Good evening, Mr. Ollivander. Please don't tell Professor Dumbledore about the changes in my wand or my visit. Bye."

"Good evening, Mr. Potter. I didn't notice you had been here today."

Throaty laughter followed Harry out on the street, as he ran to the Leaky Cauldron. He had to make haste or he would miss his bus. Quickly slipping through the crowd he threw a "Good bye, Tom." at

the old inn keeper and rushed out of the door into muggle London, throwing his cloak over himself and vanishing unnoticed into thin air as he went. Nobody saw a boy slipping onto the bus in London and of in Little Whinging. The Order guard took no notice as Harry tiptoed into the garden and waited for his past self to finish talking to Hedwig. Having arrived safely back home, he finally allowed himself to relax. It had been one hell of a day. Snatching up the sandwiches his past self had left him, he went into Dudley's old habitat, making room for a makeshift bed on the floor. Exhausted he curled up, too tired to think of the day's events. He craved sleep. Problems had to wait for the next morning.

Chapter 6

Hours after Harry had gone to sleep, a tired and disheveled man stumbled up the path to an ancient castle. Tremors wrecked his body and his greasy black hair was in disarray. Small gashes all over his body oozed blood and he had to pause continuously to gasp for breath and steady himself as not to fall. He couldn't have gotten up again without help. As he reached the doors to the entrance hall of Hogwarts he leaned his body against it for a moment. Then he pushed them open. He was greeted by a stern faced woman with grey hair, who, at his sight, gasped sharply.

"Severus! Oh Merlin, what has he done to you this time? Just a moment, I'll bring you up to the hospital wing immediately. Thankfully Poppy is here tonight. Can you walk for a bit longer?"

Tenderly she grasped the younger man and supported him on the way up the stairs.

"Really, Minerva. It looks worse than it is. I can walk alone. And I certainly do not need Poppy fussing over me. I need to talk to the Headmaster."

She didn't release her hold on him.

"Nonsense. You are barely able to stand, let alone walk. I haven't seen you with such an extreme post-cruciatus reaction for quiet some time. And Albus will have to come down to the infirmary."

They had reached the door of the hospital wing.

"Not to mention the blood your are losing at the moment. You should be quiet lightheaded. Now quit squirming so much. Poppy! We need you out here!"

The matron came bustling out of her office.

"No need to yell, Minerva. I'm not deaf yet. What did y... Oh my! Severus. You look as if you had a meeting with the knight bus. Frontal at that. Come over here, dear. None of that frown of yours. No, not the scowl either, you know better than that. Oh, I swear, apart from Harry, you are the most accident prone person I know."

She went into her office again to get some of the more rare medical potions. Giving him a smoky red one she put the others on the nightstand beside the bed he had been deposited on.

"Drink this. I'll just mend those cuts and then do a scan of the other injuries. He-who-must-not-be-named must have been in a right mood today. Sit still, Severus. Go on Min, call Albus down, you can use the fireplace in my office."

"There is no need for that, ladies. Severus, my boy, I thought I made it clear that you should come to my office straight away? I wondered where you might be when a portrait alerted me of your current location."

Calm blue eyes seemed to have lost their twinkle and where looking at the man over half-moon-shaped glasses, narrowed nearly to slits.

"Really Albus. Even you can't think the information he gathers more important than his health. To make him go up to your office. He couldn't even stand upright on his own."

Poppy Pomfrey shook her head.

"You should know better. If you just waited here for him, everything would be easier."

She looked at the scanning for curses and injuries she had just done.

"Well, Severus. There are a few hairline fractures and a good deal of

bruising. Apart from that everything was repaired and I already lifted the lingering curses."

As he made motions as if to get out of the bed she continued.

"But you will still stay for the night. You haven't been exposed to that many Cruciatus curses in along time."

The white haired old man sighed into his beard. Why did they all have to get into his way? He was 162 years old and he knew what was best. Why couldn't they understand that a delay could cost human lives? If they only did what he told them to do, everything would fall into place. These younglings always had to be so headstrong, it only ever got them into trouble.

"Now, Severus, what did you do to get such a reaction out of Tom? He must have had a reason if he punished you so? I want to hear every last detail of this meeting. What are you waiting for?"

Behind him the matron and the Transfiguration teacher exchanges incredulous looks. This was not normal behavior for Albus Dumbledore. Sure, he was obsessed with control, trying to save as many lives as he could. But even on a bad day he didn't sound so snappish. But lately, his whole personality seemed to have changed.

'Or is it maybe only reverting back to nature, escaping his mask? We need to keep a close eye on him. He has been getting more demeaning and careless.'

Minerva McGonagall sighed.

'Alastor and I have known for some time now that something is wrong. Terribly so. He has begun years ago to play us Order members against each other. I never understood why he left Harry with the Dursley's to begin with. But to cage him there like an animal? He should have received extra training long before Hogwarts with the

bouts of accidental magic he did.'

She shook her head.

'I need to talk to Alastor. Playing the good little puppy for Albus is one thing. But something has to have happened today, to make this behavior occur. He is treating Severus like dirt. I wonder if he has ever treated him differently. I also never understood why the Marauders weren't punished worse for what they did to him.'

She caught the eyes of the matron and indicated for her to keep an eye on the Headmaster and her patient. Then she unceremoniously left the infirmary and went back to her quarters. This was exactly why she had waited for her younger colleague in the hall. She pulled a small package wrapped in cloth out of her robe pocket as soon as she entered the small room in her quarters that didn't have a portrait or mirror and threw up a privacy charm. She pulled the cloth free of the small handheld mirror.

"Alastor. Alastor, answer me."

The voice of the grizzled old auror came out of the mirror as his face's outline was revealed. "Yes, Minerva? What has you in such a state? Has anything happened?"

"Oh some thing happened, all right. Albus happened. He had the audacity to scold Severus for not coming directly to his office for a report after the Deatheater meeting. The lad was shaking in his boots from exposure to Cruciatus when I found him at the entrance. You should have heard him. 'What did you do that Tom punished you so hard? I want to hear every last detail.' Can you believe that man? There was a time I thought he could never do anything wrong. But after the last few decades... I think we will have to do something and soon. Did anything unusual happen today? His behavior was rather odd."

Alastor Moody's face had grown dark while listening to the Transfigurations teacher.

"Yes. It might have been my fault. It was about Harry. The lad went grocery shopping this morning, of his own free will and to be able to get edible food in good quantity, I might add. Actually asked me to come along. The muggle supermarket we went to was inside the wards, but as soon as Albus heard about it, he went on and on how Harry had broken his promise to stay inside the house and other crap. Molly was about to go on a rampage and I asked him if he had asked Harry to stay inside the house or inside the wards. We had talked about that shortly, you know. The more I see of the lad, the more I like him. He is absolutely nothing like his father in personality, even if there might be some mischief buried deep under. Not that I didn't like James, mind you. Keep an eye on Albus. He seems to act worse every time I see him and is likely to go off the deep end anytime soon. He is almost nothing like my old friend anymore. The Albus I remember was good natured and couldn't harm an innocent or subordinate, even if he had a ferocious temper when roused. His actions of late worry me a great deal. And the other Order members seem to follow him like mindless sheep, apart from a few special ones. Tomorrow after the Order meeting I'll talk to some of them. We need to be prepared if Albus cracks. I wonder if it is only the pressure, his obsession or something else entirely. We'll talk then, Minerva. Remember, constant..."

"... vigilance, I know, Alastor. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

Sighing she wrapped the mirror again.

'It is as if he is trying to make Harry into a mindless puppet. Thank Merlin the lad is a bit more stubborn than Albus expected. Now what to do about Severus. This charade can't go on too much longer, it would break him entirely. But Albus has his claws in him and deep at that. If only he could let go of all that guilt. I thank Merlin everyday that Albus doesn't know that he is my half-sisters child. Otherwise he

would never allow us near each other.'

She left the chamber and took a long look around her quarters. Soon she was on her way to the infirmary again. Severus was sleeping in his bed and Poppy was in her office. She knocked shortly before she entered.

"Poppy. How did it go?"

"As well as can be expected, I think. Albus behave rather like a vulture. Sometimes... even Fawkes isn't found in his company very often lately. Severus' report was interesting. It left Albus in a mood, though. Worse than before. I swear, he was only a hairs breadth away from cursing the poor boy. I don't understand why, really. If anything he should have been happy. It was like this..."

flashback

"He was in a very odd mood when he called us together. He even cursed that blasted snake of his for not getting out of his way fast enough. He never cursed Nagini before. It is unheard of. The anger he displayed was expressed in two bouts of Cruciatus for all of us without reason. He has had Lucius searching for some ancient texts on Black Magic and some powerful artifacts. Lucius didn't have any luck with the artifacts and only vague leads on the books. He was given to us to play with – after casting crucio on him, naturally. He wasn't satisfied with Lucius suffering at our hands and decided to teach us how to do it the right way."

Severus had to sip a bit of water to moisten his parched throat. He hadn't screamed like today in a long time.

"Well, get on with it. I don't have all day, boy."

The Headmaster was rather impatient. He needed information, not useless accounts of the Dark Lords temper tantrums. Even if it was

good to hear that all those misguided people were punished extensively for their transgressions.

"After he had ranted a while, it came out that he had felt the most powerful of the books being destroyed. You know that those books are rarities, there is only one single copy in existence for each book. They were deemed indestructible by all but the most powerful magical beings, because they are so twisted in their nature that they resist all but the most holy magic and even if you know the right ritual you need an incredible amount of power to get through the protection around them. We can thank all the stars that he didn't get his hands on them. He couldn't locate them correctly, even if he can feel them and all but the minor ones seem to have vanished off of the market. He was furious that the most powerful book in Britain was permanently taken out of his reach. Not even Potters escapades have ever raised his temper this way."

Another sip. His throat felt as if it would crack open soon. In the background he found Poppy hovering with a sour look on her face. Directed at the Headmaster. Interesting.

"Would you try to concentrate, Severus. I'm not here to waste my time watching you drink water. Poppy can give you a voice restorative after we're finished, if that is necessary."

He drummed his finger on the nightstand. Nothing happened. He narrowed his eyes, fury burning in them, and grabbed the Slytherin Head of house by his collar, shaking him like mad.

"Do I have to repeat myself? The meeting, boy."

A gasp was heard behind him and he remembered belatedly that he wasn't in his office and they weren't alone.

"Albus! Release him this instant! How can he tell you what you need to know if you don't let him. This behavior is inexcusable." The

matron separated him from the Potions Master and pushed him back into his chair.

"If you want to throw a tantrum, Albus, you are welcome to leave. Otherwise, mind your manners."

Severus Snape was shocked. Never before had the Headmaster treated him like this. He felt, as if he was dealing with a totally different person. He had never been so derogatory and violating – or had he?

"The Dark Lord wasn't too happy about the purging of the knowledge from this world. When Avery told him that there were problems with the recruiting of the werewolves and vampires as well as the giants and that the centaurs had refused him completely, he lost it. I thankfully escaped most of the curses he threw at us, but more than half of our numbers were unconscious after that. I've never seen anything like this display of magic, not even in your duel with him, sir. Afterwards he asked the remaining few of us about a shift in the ambient magic he had felt this morning, well – more like noon. He seemed frightened by it, if I read him correctly. But no one had felt anything and the five Death Eaters he had sent to investigate returned around that time. They hadn't found even one tiny bit of information. I think, Headmaster, you can imagine how well that went over with him. As he was satisfied with the potions and information I brought I got off rather lightly. It seems, as if there is a new player out there, sir. Powerful and allied to the light."

end flashback

The matron shook her head.

"Albus was fuming when he left. He mumbled something about everyone interfering with his plans and how he knew best and why they couldn't just let him handle everything. If anything, I think, he managed to shock Severus. He thought it was rather good news that

something was able to shake You-know-who like this and we might have a powerful new ally. I put him to sleep afterwards. Albus was rather rattled, I think. Something out of his control getting in You-know-who's way. He immediately tried to put it off as another Dark Lord rising. It gets worse, Minnie. Albus behavior, I mean."

The deputy Headmistress nodded sadly.

"I know, Poppy. I talked to Alastor and he told me that Albus might soon not longer be acceptable as head of the Order or Hogwarts. Well – not in so many words or clear-cut, but... The Order seems bent on following him into the abyss. So many people in and outside of the Order look at him with awe. They think, that just because he is Albus Dumbledore, he has to be right. The more questionable of his decisions are waved away. They look at him as if he were a second Merlin. And he uses it against them. We were not much different, Poppy. The next generations are the same, apart from the majority of the Slytherins. And they don't really know him, they get an anti-Dumbledore image from their parents. I just don't know where it will end, Poppy. Sometimes I feel really guilty because I doubt him, you know? But I have been disillusioned a while ago."

"Yes, I know, Minnie. Looking at everything now, I'm rather glad we didn't talk to him about the changes or anything else he does. At the moment he trusts us to follow his every directive and we can keep an eye on him. We can't do anything about his deeds, though, rather than try and counteract them before they occur. It gets tiring, Min. I'm just happy Alastor is with us in this."

"As am I, Poppy. I talked to Dippet's portrait, you know. It seems there are spells on all of the portraits in the office, barring them from spilling secrets to anyone. Dippet told me about a very interesting fact Albus hasn't shared with us. After the ministry incident Harry was up there with him. It seems, Albus knew the wording of the prophecy and told Harry. The portraits couldn't hear anything, but the lad destroyed a good part of the office because of whatever Albus told

him. Harry is weary, it seems. He was never one to do as told just because it was told by an adult. I wonder how soon we can get him out of that house. It can't be good for him to be away from his friends and Remus now. Not that Headquarters would be any better. I just hope Harry is okay. Severus is on guard in a few days. Hopefully he won't antagonize Harry. That could get really ugly. It's a shame he only sees James in Harry and never Lily."

She sighed and stood up.

"It's late. We should get some sleep, Poppy. I have a feeling we will need our energy in the days to come. Good night."

"Good night, Min. Sleep well."

The matron looked after her friend for some time, before checking her charge and going to bed herself.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny, and Harry decided, after letting his past self out of the back-door, to do a bit about the remodeling and furniture on the ground floor. If Moody looked now, he would know something wasn't right. His relatives absence could be explained – sometimes, that is. A nearly empty house could not. Had the ex-auror memorized the layout? Hopefully not. But in the end, everything would come out despite his precautions, he knew that.

He would need some of the books he bought yesterday. A doubtful look at his new trunk later he entered it. To just go careening through the books he bought would be foolhardy. Better to sort them out from the beginning. He collected everything he would need in the storeroom and put it into his backpack. As he entered the library something he hadn't noticed before struck him. He could see in his trunk, it was as bright as daylight in here. Thankfully. He took the boxes and bookcases out of his backpack and enlarged the boxes,

stacking them in one corner. In the trunk manual he found the appropriate charm to further enlarge the room, which he promptly did. Then he enlarged the bookcases he got in the family vault.

He had to enlarge the room another two times, because first he couldn't fit all the cases and then he remembered that he would need to make new ones for the rest of his books. When he had all the bookcases against the walls he noticed the portal wasn't in sight. He sighed and began to relocate the cases until he found it. It was in one of the long walls and he promptly removed all bookcases from that wall. A sudden idea had struck. He had found the catalogue and the manual while placing and fixing all but one of the bookcases with a sticking charm to the walls. After leafing through the manual Harry stepped towards the last case and touched it with his wand.

"Duplexus bookcase."

A new case materialized next to him and he repeated the process several times. Most of the cases were put into aisles and stuck to the floor, their backs facing each other and a label 'new books' was put on them. Setting the wards to accept new books was the last step.

Having done just that Harry walked over to the boxes and began to unpack them magically. It was easier that way. He directed the books towards the new cases in no particular order. First the load from 'Flourish and Blotts', then the ones from 'Ciels'. He began a new case for the later, labeled accordingly. After that he changed the wards back to normal. Then he walked towards the free wall and snatched the catalogue up. He found the section for new books that had been created as he labeled the cases and changed 'new case 1' to 'Transfiguration' and tapped it decisively with his wand, to be sorted from beginner over average to advanced (the wards provided the author, title and a summary) and by author. Harry did that for all the normal new cases, the books from 'Ciel' could wait a while longer. In the back of the library books were flying from one case to another and sometimes to a third and fourth, until each had found its place in

Harry's system.

Harry put the catalogue into the nearest case and walked over to the back of the room, to find the books on remodeling houses and decorating. As he went back to the portal to go and get some samples from the wooden planks he took a look at several cases still located in the middle of the room. They were filled with muggle books and had been left on purpose. Those would make up the library in the basement of Nr. 4 Privet Drive. The spells for the creation of permanent selective portals was found in the trunk manual, so the connection of both libraries should be easy.

He arrived in the same spot outside that he had left from. It had taken him a bit more than an hour to partially organize the books. He collected his lists and plans for the remodeling of the house. Now Harry was on his way downstairs, to finally bend the interior of his house to his wishes. The strained normalcy his relatives had tried to achieve would have to go. He laughed delightedly. It would finally be his home not just a place of residence where he wasn't even tolerated. He skipped down the stairs, jumping the last few and entered the livingroom. Walking over to the window he scanned the drive and finally saw Arthur Weasley under an invisibility cloak.

'Huh. Shouldn't he be working? Oh, right. It is Saturday. Well, at least he isn't looking in here. But I really wonder why nobody noticed the missing curtains and furniture. But that just shows that they are only interested in a weapon and not in me personally. Their loss.'

He stepped into the shadow besides the window as to be invisible to any person staring in through the window. Then Harry sat down on the floor and placed the books, papers and wood samples beside him, but took a hold of the remodeling book and began to read. At first he had wanted to cut through everything he didn't need, but decided it was better to just read the whole thing. That would ward off any mistakes out of missing knowledge. The better he understood the whole process, the easier he would be able to convert it. The first

step seemed to be to settle on a basic design for a room, like he had with his trunk. He knew he wanted things a bit different from normal English design, but he didn't want a purely Asian design either.

'What to do? I know. I'll go with the flow. Just take everything that feels good and everything I like, mix it together into my style and decorate accordingly. First to do that scan of the foundation, then to change the floor into hardwood floor. Easy to care for and to clean. With the right charms I get it to be self-cleaning and impervious to scratches. There are special spells for such changes to make them permanent and put the basis under as not to get creaking floor boards.'

He looked back at the book.

There are different spells for different kinds of wood. To make it easier, you can just put a sample of wood in the middle of the room you want to change and choose the general spell. In that case you have to cast from outside of the room and there should not be any other things left on the floor in the room you seek to change. The incantation is 'Tellus mutare argumentum lignum dato'. To finalize the spell you need to speak the incantation 'Cautus' and protect it with a password. A normal 'finite incantatem' will not revert the floor back now. You will need to use a reversal spell found at the end of the book together with the password.

'Sounds easy enough. If it goes wrong I can always change it back before I secure the changes.'

Harry took his papers and books as well as the wood samples and took them into the kitchen and left them on the table. He selected the beech wood, brought it into the livingroom and placed it on the floor in the middle of the room. Then he walked right back into the kitchen and aimed his wand at the livingroom floor.

"Tellus mutare argumentum lignum dato."

And then he watched in fascination as the spell shot out of his wand in form of a light brown light, towards the wood sample. The sample sank into the floor and his chosen wood began to spread to the corner of the room, floor board after floor board. When the change had finished he walked out into the livingroom again. Absolutely no creaks. Wonderful.

He fetched the trunk manual he had also brought and leafed through it for the dirt-repelling charm, an auto-cleaning charm and the impenetrable charm the carpenter had used on his trunk. He was sure that he had heard of them in school, but couldn't for the life of him remember them. There. Perfect. Casting them in quick succession, followed by a polishing charm he was impressed. Quickly he secured the changes with "Cautus livingroom." It was a dull password, but there was not a chance in hell that he could possibly forget it.

A tiny smirk graced Harry's features. The floor was perfect, not too light, not too dark. Now to fix the walls and ceiling, enlarge it and put the furniture in. The plaster on the walls was charmed in interchanging tones of light green, then fixed to look like a forest clearing with shrubbery and trees. The ceiling was charmed light blue in the same manner, with tree crowns sticking in from the sides and occasional clouds drifting about. Satisfied with his work he secured it. Later he would maybe go and paint some animals manually and add an illusion charm for people he didn't want to see this.

'This book is a treasure chest of ideas and tools. I didn't think it could be this easy to make such advanced changes. But that's magic for you. Always expect the unexpected. This is loads better than doing it by hand. No smelling paint, no splatters marking the floor, no waiting for the paint to dry.'

Harry enlarged the room until he deemed it well and did another check for the plumbing and the electric lines. Everything was just as

it should be: normal and intact. He fetched a slightly darker wood sample, enlarged that too and began to cut out boards in various shapes.

'Who would have ever thought that all those chores for the Dursley's would have a positive side effect. I certainly know my way around paint and tools, as often as I had to repair and set up furniture.'

He knew precisely what he wanted, having a clear picture before his minds eye.

When Harry was finished he had several shelves for books, CDs and DVDs, as well as for a stereo and a small table for a TV. A low table was placed in the middle of the room, its round shape anchored to the floor by one massive leg in the middle. Magically enhanced to stabilize it, he had charmed it to be able to rotate and to be adjustable in height. The shelves he stuck on the wall with password protected charms. That hag that had been Sirius mother had had some rather good ideas after all, he decided.

Then he went to get some of Dudley's old clothes to make an armchair or two and a sofa. Upstairs he also took a look on one of the TVs and got the new stereo system out of his trunk. He repaired the TV and carried everything down, where he set the electronic items up and stuck the boxes high up on the wall, sinking them about halfway into the walls and hiding the cables totally inside them.

'The wonders of magic. A muggle couldn't have done that so completely without a good deal more of expenditure.'

A few wand waves later he had some extremely comfortable and durable pieces of furniture to laze about in, read, listen to music or watch TV. The covers were in a darker green than the walls, but still quiet light and the cushions he made were of a soft cream color.

Satisfied, Harry took a long look around, before he grabbed the

remote control and switched on the TV. Switching quickly through the channels he found one that played music that he liked and left it on. Then he moved into the kitchen and selected other wood samples to do the corridor and entrance area, as well as the staircase. Humming silently to the music, he set to work. After that he decided to give the tiles in the kitchen a once over. Before enlarging it slightly to have more space to move around while cooking and more room for the table and some comfortable chairs. He had to adjust his earlier transfigurations of the table and chairs a bit, but was finally happy with the outcome. As it was already past noon, he began to cook something for himself, rice and some vegetables and some hot sauce to go along with it.

When it was ready, Harry was alerted by some unusual sounds. Outside he could hear the Order guard changing through the window he had opened before. The stumbling, cursing and scolding was unmistakable. After he heard the loud pop of Mr. Weasley apparating away, he decided to do something very idiotic, even in his own opinion. He opened the window fully and addressed his new guard.

"Hello Tonks. You are on guard duty again today? You can stop playing dead, you know. That human shaped indentation in the grass is a dead giveaway. I will have to mow it out there in the front too, like I did yesterday in the back, for that to be deceiving. Would you maybe like something to eat? I heard you saying just now that you didn't get to eat something because of a delay in the ministry. I wanted to eat just now and there is more than enough to feed you and feed the Dursleys this evening. No answer? I can hear your stomach growling, you know? Just come into the back garden, I'll bring two plates and forks and we can talk a bit. The Dursleys aren't here at the moment. Aunt Petunia decided to visit one of the neighbors for a bit of gossip over tea and pie."

With that Harry closed the window and put some rice, vegetable and sauce on two plates. Grabbing the forks and calling himself a dunderhead over and over again he walked to the back-door, and

switched the TV off on his way. But he wanted to really talk to Tonks. She was Sirius cousin and he wanted to know how she was really doing. He had the slight suspicion that she moped around quiet a bit, which caused her clumsiness to increase beyond the usual level. She was even more noisy than before, but less noticeable and easier on the eyes without all those vibrant colors. Hopefully he hadn't made the mistake of his life and given his situation completely away. On the other hand, he had seen that a distraction worked wonders yesterday. If he could fool Moody, he could fool anyone.

'I'm getting arrogant. That isn't good. It causes mistakes and just thinking about being only a little like Malfoy makes me sick.'

Chapter 7

When Harry dumped the dirty plates in the sink, the afternoon was well underway. He had talked to Tonks for almost her entire 4 hour shift. But it had been well worth it. At first she hadn't wanted to talk or even accept his invitation, but her rumbling stomach had in the end proven more convincing than Harry's words. They had begun eating in silence and Tonks had sneaked a look at him every few seconds. Then she had congratulated him on his cooking and deemed it better than Molly Weasleys.

flashback

"You know, Harry, I never knew you could cook, let alone this good. This is better than Molly's cooking, 'cause she never does foreign food; always plain, old English dishes."

She had nearly shoveled the food into her mouth.

"And she doesn't go and mixes things to create something new. How did you learn?"

Then she had suddenly choked as she seemed to remember something.

"I'm sorry, Harry. I shou..."

Harry chuckled. The Dursleys and their treatment of him had always been a sore point. But now, secure in the knowledge that he wouldn't have to see them again anytime soon, he was able to just wave it off.

"Don't worry, Tonks. No harm done. I learned to cook early on, at about four or five. They made me do breakfast first, later on lunch and dinner were added to that list. Uncle Vernon was much too lazy to learn how to cook – and he thought it was work for women – and Aunt Petunia isn't even able to boil water properly. Thank heaven baby

food can be heated in a microwave, otherwise.... Well, after some time I began to enjoy cooking and I took to experimenting. They had to eat what I made, after all. Mostly I didn't get more than scrapes and some leftovers from meals, though."

Tonks looked aghast.

"They made you cook, but didn't let you eat with them? Unbelievable. Say, why aren't you better with potions? If you can cook like this, it should be easy for you. Ummm, may I have seconds, or would that get you in trouble?"

Harry managed to calm her down.

"It's no problem. Because of Dudley's enormous appetite, the amount I cook is enough to feed an army. I'll get some more for us. After you threatened them, they literally begged me to cook for them, even if they had to give me a decent amount of the meal for it."

He stood up and took her plate. When he reached the door, he turned back for a moment. She seemed much less nervous and fidgety now. She was stretched in the shade when he came back out. He gave her the full plate.

"About potions. There are two, not three reasons. One is Snape. He decided even before my sorting to hate me. He terrorizes me in every lesson. The second reason are the Slytherins. They delight in throwing unnecessary and volatile ingredients into our cauldrons, especially Neville's and mine. And we get blamed while they get off without so much as a scolding for endangering everyone. The third - and probably most important - is that I just haven't tried. I didn't want any more attention than I already had, and after having to endure his treatment, I did even less than what I deemed necessary in any other subject."

"Isn't that a bit counterproductive?" Her voice was incredulous. "And

what about... I mean..."

"In a way you are right of course. If I had know back than what I know now, if Dumbledore had just been honest with me, beginning when I first asked, then the whole situation would be a different one. But I could have learned my lungs out, that still wouldn't have prevented the situation we are in now. Not with him acting like he did."

Tonks looked at Harry. Really looked. He looked better than she would have thought. His whole demeanor was not as she had expected. But in his eyes she could see shadows. Lingerin pain, grief and sorrow. But she also saw determination and icy anger in their depth. Some kind of happiness was layered all over everything else.

"You are coping with... Sirius death? Harry, how do you truly feel? Under all those masks."

Harry was startled.

"You can see through me that easily, Tonks? Hmmm, I should have expected that. It hurts. Terribly. I had nightmares every night in Hogwarts, seeing him fall again and again. The first night here I couldn't sleep and decided to really think about it - well more like I couldn't think about anything else. I realized that he wouldn't want me to mope. I realized, I wouldn't have done anything differently, couldn't have. I tried to call him, but Kreacher told me he wasn't there. Snape just looked on in hidden glee and the toad wanted to curse me good. Dumbledore and McGonagall weren't there and I didn't have the slightest notion that HE was able to manipulate my visions. I did the best I could under those circumstances. I would have died for Sirius, as he would and did for me. In a reversed situation the actions would have been the same. I miss him, Tonks. Every minute of every hour of every day. But I want to make him proud. I don't want his death to be in vain. Can you understand that?"

She didn't respond, just stared into space.

"Tonks? You okay?"

"Yeah. You know what? Until now I hadn't really thought about it that way. He was so happy when we met. He was the only magical relative that accepted me, apart from my mum. His death hit me really hard. Probably not as hard as you, as I still have other loving family, but hard enough. The others at HQ don't seem to understand and Molly is ranting about him. How rash he was, how he was such a bad influence on you children and so on. I can't hear it any more. She just makes it hurt more. I'm just glad she hasn't had the gall to say that it is good that he is dead."

As she looked up she saw Harry's enraged face.

"I shouldn't have said that, huh? But she makes me so angry. He can't defend himself anymore, why can't she drop it already?"

His eyes were spitting fire as he replied.

"It is good that you told me. At least now I know what I will eventually be facing. Don't worry about it. She always seemed to dislike him. Though, I really would have thought that she had more decorum than that."

end flashback

They had talked after that for quite some time and before she had gone back to the front to meet the next guard, she had told him that she was feeling a good deal better after their talk. He had managed to make her remember his godfather in life instead of death. Harry had asked her, if she knew if Remus was on guard duty any time soon. To hear that he would be there in three days time had shaken him a bit. Tonks had also told him that he wasn't really himself lately, but much more temperamental than his usual calm self. Harry

wanted desperately to talk to the man. He was, however, not sure if he was ready yet.

After he took a look at the den, he transfigured some of the old clothes into cream colored curtains and covered the windows with them. Then he went upstairs and began to sort through the old CDs and DVDs Dudley had left. There were quite a few that he found interesting. More than half of them were broken though. Harry cast a quick reparo on every single one of those. He levitated the ones he liked downstairs after he packed the others up. He decided to sell them on the next flea market. There would be other things to be sold, he was sure of it. He changed the shelves for the CDs and DVDs a bit, to a more rack like quality, and began to sort the discs onto them. Then he went upstairs again to look for a DVD-player and was a bit surprised to find not only 3 players but also one that doubled as recorder. Harry shook his head.

'I knew Dudley was spoiled. But this is a bit much even for him. I wonder just how much money did Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon spend on him? Not even Malfoy could be this doted upon. His father would skin him alive if he ever threw a tantrum like Dudley's or destroyed his things like this. Then again, all it would need is a simple repairing charm.'

"Reparo. Reparo. Reparo. Reparo."

The recorder was promptly brought down and set up. Relaxing into one of the armchairs, Harry began to think about the actions he should take next. It was necessary to first change the house and finish the remodeling and furnishing. But he had done more magic on this day than on a whole day in school and he felt it. He was tired, even though his new wand had made it easier to draw up and direct his power, he felt he had his magic better under control and was not putting too much or too little in every spell. He needed to consult his list and set up a plan for the furthering of his plans with the house. But he also needed a plan for the study he intended to do. The

continued use of his magic would tire him out and probably help enlarge his stamina and reserves. That was entirely in his favor. He felt the urge to dive into the more interesting books he had found, but first, he knew, he had to relearn the basics and magical theory. It would help later on and it would give him some rest between his bouts of changing his home.

'Should I use the time-turner again tomorrow morning? It would be better, I think. It'll give me a chance to think a bit before I meet Remus again. Strange to call him that in my mind and aloud. But it changed quickly, after Sirius death. Maybe because he is the only one left. I'll furnish the bedroom of the trunk as well as the livingroom and the laboratory. Then I'll sort the rest of the books, put the ones from Hogwarts into the library and put the potion ingredients away. Just as well that I haven't been in there for more than the initial creation of the library. I'll also begin with the revision of my first year texts and see how much I get done. I wonder if there is a way to make sure that I won't forget anything I'll learn? And I really need to look for a reference to the mind immersion I have done. Maybe I should do that right about now. It's still quite early and there is no need to go to sleep this soon.'

As Harry got up, he noticed the warm atmosphere around him. The room had been totally changed from the look and feeling it had while the Dursleys had still been there. It was more welcoming now and not so stiff. He concentrated on the blood protection around the house. It was stronger than it had ever been and he knew without a doubt, that it could now properly shield his mind and would hold every overly dark creature with evil intent at a suitable safe distance, due to the overlapping of strength to the outer wards. In Dudley's old room he opened the second compartment and looked inside. It seemed his other self had been busy. He took the catalogue out and opened it in his search for a good Occlumency book. He found a searching system similar to the search engine of a computer. In the end he called forth all the books he thought could hold interesting information and went back into the den. After that, he fetched himself

a notebook, a pen and some ink from his old cupboard, where he had stored everything none perishable. It was cramped, but at the moment he wasn't in the mood to enlarge it.

For a moment Harry was lost in thought, then he decided to forego an armchair and conjured up a beanbag. He had become very familiar with that spell over the course of the last year. His round table was lowered and the books spread about. He began with a book called 'Your mind and you' to which the author was not known. It was one of the books he had found at 'Ciels' and it was relatively old. After a short time he was seething. He had been lucky to chose this book first, as it was most informative and he was suddenly sure he would find what he was searching for. But it also gave a detailed description of the learn process of Occlumency. As it was written there, he should have first been taught how to meditate, then the first subtle probing in form of Legilimency, mostly for happy thoughts, should have been done, for him to be able to recognize the feeling of an invasion. After that he should have been instructed on the construction of a imagined mind shield and only then should a real, but low power Legilimency attack be tried. Otherwise the new 'shield' would simply be crushed and more harm than good would be done. And Snape had attacked his untrained mind full force.

Harry magic began to crackle around him and he knew instinctively that this time he would not be able to calm down. Carefully he set the book down and stood up. Then he went into the basement, where he put up a strong silencing charm and several strong shield charms. He couldn't just let his magic free however, if the events in the old goats office were any indication. Briefly he wished he was in the Room of Requirement and then transfigured some wood into a slew of porcelain plates, which he threw at the walls accompanied by his screams. It took him about three quarters of an hour to blow all his anger of. Afterwards he returned to his books and continued to read through 'Your mind and you'. He didn't try any of the mentioned techniques because he wanted to be sure of his own status before he began experimenting. In the second to last chapter he finally

found his answer.

An Occlumency user that has advanced to master level should after some time be able to access his or her own mind like a room or building. This level has not been reached for more than a hundred years now, simply because nobody invests the time and work anymore, as it normally isn't needed. The level to stave of even a master legilimencer is that of advanced and as it is normally viewed as mastery of Occlumency, the process for the achievement of true mastery is not found in any of the common books I perused. To give my readers a full account I searched tirelessly, found and included the information in this book. The process is tedious at best and is normally not finished in under at least a decade. There is however an exception, as I found out by chance. In case the mind of the person in question is strong and is ruthlessly attacked by a master legilimencer continuously in short intervals, the mind is first weakened a great deal and more accessible for manipulation. Normally, if the attacks are discontinued, the strength will build up again.

But in the totally unlikely case of an emotion overload shortly after the discontinuation because of overwhelming past memories and present events as well as suppressed emotions concerning both, a very rare effect can come into play. In this case the person in question will find themselves bodily in the recesses of their mind, to be confronted with the memories of the events responsible for the overload. It will not be possible to leave the mindscape before sorting everything out. This process will automatically sort the rest of the memories said person has into categories. From this point onwards the mind is accessible to the person at any given time, assuming the relevant techniques are available to the person. A feeble mind shield will also be set up. This shield needs to be strengthened, otherwise it will fall at the first attack of a legilimencer. In case the shield is strengthened, the person learns in the process how to construct such a shield in the first place and can be called a true master of

Occlumency because of the mastery they have over their own mind. More often the shield is destroyed or simply fades after a time and the person finds themselves on an advanced intermediate level.

This effect has been noted to have happened only eight known times in the last 1.500 years, and only one person ever advanced to mastery through this effect. To my knowledge this is not mentioned in any other book, as I found the information in the old diary of an Occlumency master and I didn't make it common knowledge. There won't be many copies of my book, therefore the knowledge will be restricted to my readers in the future also.

'Now that is what I call shocking. So, if I strengthen the weak shield around my mind now, I can count myself as a master at Occlumency? On a level not even Snape, Tom and Dumbles are? I think I need a stiff drink. Could that have been Dumbledore intention? But it says practically nobody knows. I would have been told how to build a mind shield and what to expect. And if Snape had known, I bet he wouldn't have attacked as he did. He knows that I know about his spying. He would have been in severe danger if Tommy boy ever found out. So, Dumbles intention was to weaken me? But why?'

Harry stood up and began to pace.

'Maybe, I became too attached to Sirius? I didn't listen to the old goat so closely anymore, and he managed to drive a wedge between me and my friends last summer. Isolated, I would have been fixated on him. But why did he ignore me then? Wouldn't it have been more beneficial to him if my trust in him wasn't shattered? I always knew he wasn't totally sane, but maybe I overlooked it like every other person, because of his grandfather façade? As obsessed as he is, it makes him a good deal more dangerous then I ever thought possible. Wait a moment! How did Tommy boy know that the image of him torturing my godfather would lure me to the ministry? Wormtail couldn't have been responsible, because then it would have

happened sooner and I know he didn't get it out of my mind. He shouldn't have known that there was any closer connection, as Sirius was on the run. Could Dumbledore... No, even he couldn't be so cruel?'

Harry sighed. If what he thought was true, then the old wizard was even more directly responsible for Sirius death. He must have known what would happen. But he really didn't want to believe it. The only chance to know the truth would be to question him under Veritaserum. To do so legally, it would have to happen in a trial under heavy accusation. Impossible at the moment. He sat down again.

Looking through the book, Harry memorized the section about making a mind shield, then he studied the techniques for mind immersion. Lying down on the sofa he calmed his breathing and directed his thoughts inward. It took him four tries, but in the end he found himself in the familiar environment of his own mind and noticed the changes from before. It was much neater and welcoming in there. He took another look around and then marched towards the balcony he could see. He had to laugh at the scene outside. He was on a tropical island and in a fortress disguised as bungalow. And all around the island he could see the weakening shield that had been created on his first day back. He sat down and began the long process of strengthening the shield. He would have to spend a considerable amount of time on it every day to get it up to his preferred strength. Not even Dumbledore would be able to violate his mind then.

The sun was already setting when Harry woke up from the trip into his mindscape and his stomach made it known that food would be a good idea. He decided to make himself some fruit salad and went into the kitchen, switching on the lights on the way. He was startled out of his thoughts a while later when something knocked on the kitchen window. Hedwig was out, but he had left the window in his old room open for her. Curious he opened the window and let a pompous looking black owl in. It settled on the back of a chair and stared

imperiously at him, holding out a letter to him.

"Would you wait a moment? I have some bacon for you if you do."

The owl blinked. Then a friendly hoot could be heard and the pompous manner faded to leave a regal owl behind. Harry had to chuckle as he rummaged through the fridge.

"Most people do not welcome you, huh? Doesn't matter to me. Here you are."

He put the bacon on the table and liberated the owl of the letter. The ministry seal on it intrigued him, as the OWL results should only be sent out in three weeks time at the earliest. He broke the seal.

Dear Mr. Potter,

It has come to our attention that the OWL tests for several students were interrupted. This concerns mostly the Astronomy exam. For you it would also concern your History exam. As both exams have not been finished by you, through circumstances out of your control, this letter is sent to inform you of the chance to redo these exams. Home schooled children also have to take the OWLs, which is done the second and third week of the summer holidays. For students of a magical school it is possible to redo their exams then. On the second sheet of parchment you will find a list of subjects, exam times and dates as well as places. The list doubles as special portkey to and from the rooms of the Department of Education in which the tests are held. It will activate ten minutes before and after the exams take place and will be keyed to your magical signature only, as soon as you touch the list. If you want to take an OWL in a subject you haven't taken at school, it is permitted to do so if you can show the examiner that you possess at least a basic knowledge in the subject. If you want to redo one of the other exams that is also possible, but most likely you will be asked why you wish to do so and not be permitted if

your reasons are inane.

Best wishes,

Sinaia Taur,

Head of the Department of Education

Ministry of Magic

This information is restricted and protected by a specialized secrecy charm. You will not be able to talk or write about it.

Harry was stumped. There was a chance to redo his OWLs? Absolutely ingenious. He felt a tingle when he touched the list to look it over. The exams would begin on Monday. If he took into consideration the time and date the letter had been sent, it did not leave enough time for a student to learn enough if he or she had simply failed an exam because of a lack of knowledge. But for someone who had been hindered by the circumstances it was ideal, because the knowledge was still fresh in their heads.

'I wonder if Hermione knows of this. Somehow I don't think so, she finished her exams. The same goes for Ron. This information is restricted, so... This is the absolute best thing that could have happened. The only subjects I took seriously for the past few years are Defense and Charms. I answered everything on the test sheets, even the extra credit and I performed to my absolute best in the practical. If I take the exams in all other subjects I should be able to ace them. The Occlumency book said that everything I learn I will never forget again, if the mind immersion stage was reached. It also said that I would be able to absorb the knowledge faster, more completely and with increased reading tempo. Almost like eidetic memory. If I add to that the time-turner, then I have ample time to

study even Runes and Arithmancy, as those exams are at the end of the third week. Muggle studies I could pass with my eyes closed. I just wonder a bit about the exams they have in magical theory, mind arts and laws. Those aren't subjects on Hogwarts curriculum. But according to the letter I should be able to take them.'

It was just as well that Harry had already decided to study a lot. Now he would have to make a detailed plan, because if he didn't, complete chaos would break out if went back in time for all three days. He would have to be extra careful. The first day he could go back all three days would be Monday – evening that is. He had after all only purchased everything on Friday. Thankfully – or not, depending how you looked at it - the use of a time-turner wouldn't age his body, even if all the changes would be carried over. He searched for a notepad to write his plans down. Theoretically he could have repeated the same day over and over again, but were was the use in that? If he was replicated too often in one time period, it would weaken him, that much he knew. First he would have to take a look at the book about ministry regulations. He needed to know which possible subjects would be tested. That was something the teachers had never clearly stated and some of the normal as well as the extra credit questions had concerned a topic which had never been touched in lessons. He also needed them for the subjects he hadn't taken.

The first repetition of Saturday was planned already and he would live each normal day first, before going back. It provided more freedom for his future self as he could plan around the events he had already witnessed. The first exam was Herbology, so he would need to concentrate on that. Just as well that he had to sort through his potion ingredients and do some yard work. The subjects that needed the most work were the ones he had no prior experience with and History. All they had ever done were goblin rebellions. There should be so much more. Harry remembered hearing Hermione moan about the History exam, because there were so much things asked even she had never heard of, as they had never even been mentioned in

class. The History exam was together with the other main classes before the exams for the extra classes. He would have to sit down and get through it if he really wanted to do his best.

As he collected his things and food to go upstairs, he was surprised to note that the ministry owl was still there. The bacon had been consumed and now the bird was watching him serenely.

"Aren't you awaited back at the ministry?"

A blink and a slow head shake.

"No? Well, how about you come up with me then? My owl, Hedwig should be back soon. Maybe you'll like her? She is a bit picky with other owls, though. I also have some owl treats up there, if you want some."

The bird flapped its wings and landed on Harry's shoulder, softly nipping his ear. A chuckle escaped him.

"Just like Hedwig. I have to warn you that she is extremely possessive and watches jealously over me."

Harry shut the kitchen window and switched out the light before he went upstairs. He would sort through a bit of Dudley's junk while letting the day draw to a close.

Meanwhile, there was some commotion in a gloomy house. Order members were coming for the meeting tonight and when Nymphadora Tonks had stumbled in, she had woken the painting of Mrs. Black.

"Half-breed scum! Mudblood lovers! Get out of my house! You'll all die by the hands of the Dark Lord! Get you dirty hides off of my property!"

A thumping noise could be heard as Alastor Moody walked up to the painting and silenced it, only to draw the curtains in front of it shut after that. Then he fixed the junior auror with a stare, eliciting a squeak from her. He narrowed his eye and began to talk.

"Where were you yesterday evening, girl? I had promised you a talk."

He had walked towards her, while she took a step back every time he made one in her direction.

"Doesn't matter, you are here now. Now, my girl, tell me: what does your superior say to your behavior? To think that you have the gall to call yourself an auror and do not even suspect a glamourie on a man, when he comes up to you with your charge? Especially as your predecessor should still be guarding your charge? And on top of that you faint, when confronted with the truth? Now, answer me, girl."

The two had gathered quiet an audience, but luckily for Tonks, Remus had had the decency to throw up a privacy charm around them. He and Kingsley Shacklebolt had come in halfway through the portraits rant. They were the only ones to hear the tongue lashing she received. Both had a look of surprise on their faces as they heard what the ex-auror had to say, and their eyebrows had arched up all the way.

"You did what, Tonks? You fainted?"

The elder auror was incredulous.

"I... well... he was... Harry..."

She took a deep breath to calm herself.

"I came a bit early for my shift yesterday and when Mad-eye wasn't there and I couldn't find Harrys magical signature anywhere near, I

panicked. I knew he had to be inside the wards, but... When the two of you came up behind me, I was so happy that he was okay that it overrode my common sense. How the hell should I have suspected that you were right next to him, helping him to carry the shopping bags, instead of being hidden under your invisibility cloak, hmmm?"

At that comment Remus and Kingsley began to snicker.

"You... you helped... Harry... with his shopping? That's a good one, Mad-eye."

"Oh, be quiet, you two. I guarded him and it was better than having him traipsing back and forth to the supermarket another two or three times. He bought a shitload of things. And it still doesn't answer why you fainted when I lifted the glamourie."

Tonks blushed.

"Well, I had just given away some information to some random muggle, fussed over him after having sent the both of you to the floor with me, when I tripped over my feet, and then said muggle began to lecture me about my decidedly magical job. Not to mention Harry laughing his ass off and rolling on the floor because of that. When he told you to lift the glamourie, I was shocked. Then I began to suspect and when I could see it, well... What was I to do? Common sense had gone out of the proverbial window about ten minutes before that."

As she retold the event both werewolf and auror couldn't help themselves anymore. They broke down laughing. The thought of Tonks fussing over Moody in muggle glamourie and fainting afterwards was just too funny. Shaking his head the ex-auror gazed at the metamorphmagus.

"See that it doesn't happen again. You two can stop laughing now. The meeting is about to begin, we have to get into the kitchen."

Remus took down the privacy charm and the four made their way into the kitchen, reminding the crowd of the meeting. A few moments after that Dumbledore came in and the meeting started.

"Good evening to all of you. Now , I know there are a few interesting things that have happened since we last met. But first I would like to know about Harry's status. Has anything unusual happened since he is back at Privet Drive? Alastor, Arthur, Nymphadora?"

The first to speak was Arthur Weasley.

"Nothing out of the ordinary. I didn't get to see Harry and everything was peaceful."

Tonks decided to speak next.

"The entire neighborhood was quiet, but we talked for a bit and..."

Dumbledore interrupted her.

"Didn't I make it clear that he was to be left alone? He needs time to grieve Nymphadora, despite what you may think. And you know perfectly well that you are not to talk about Order business with him. What were you..."

"If you are quite finished, sir? First, he was the one to ask me if I wanted to eat with him in the backyard. He had heard me stumble and Arthur scolding me when I began my shift. He was quite insistent. His relatives were out as usual this time of the day, so he didn't get into trouble for it, especially after we warned them of. Secondly, we did not talk even remotely about the Order, he didn't even ask. And no, what we talked about is non of your business, as it doesn't concern the Order or You-know-who. But he told me to tell you that he would only send a letter three days after he last talked to one of us or if anything happened."

The kitchen was quiet. The information was not what they had expected and that she had cut Dumbledore of mid-sentence was unheard of. Molly Weasley was the first to recover. She took a deep breath and was about to begin ranting. Tonks decided to cut her off before she gave all people present a headache.

"Before you go of on a rampage, Molly, I would like to add that the Headmaster should have let me finish my report before he jumped to false conclusions. I only returned the favor to maybe preserve a little time that could be spent in a more productive way."

Mrs. Weasley sputtered.

"Good. May we continue? There was nothing else I have to add."

Dumbledore nodded congenially. Behind his mask however he was fuming. How dare that girl interrupt him? Never mind that he had done the exact same thing. Most of the order were a bit perplexed by her behavior. There were a few like Moody, McGonagall or Shacklebolt that were secretly pleased. Another one not to follow the old wizard blindly. They had to wonder if Harry had anything to do with it. It was Moody who spoke into the expectant silence.

"Well, there was nothing extraordinary I noticed on my shift. Apart from the shopping trip that is, but you already know about that. He..."

This time it was Snape who interrupted.

"That idiotic brat went shopping? He left the wards? Pray tell, what were you doing in the meantime? Somebody should go and make it clear to him that he has to stay where he is, in the house. He always has to go breaking rules, causing trouble. That spoilt, arrogant little shit can't be content to let us do our job and just do as he is told? He has to..."

"Now stop right there, young man."

Moody's bellow rattled the plates.

"Just like Albus. He did not leave the wards, the supermarket is inside of them. And no, despite what Albus may have told all of you," he looked at the other enraged Order members, "he only told Harry to stay inside the wards – and not inside the house. The wards extend a few blocks in all directions and include the park and some other things. The blood wards on the house are weak because of the negative feelings his family has for him and his extended absence. They are gaining strength as long as he is inside the outer wards. He even asked me to accompany him to be on the safe side. And you, Snape, are going to have to abandon that childish behavior of yours and see the lad for who he is, instead of his father. Questions? No? Good."

Albus Dumbledore sighed. This did not go according to plan. He hadn't been able to depict Harry as irresponsible, rebellious, rule-breaking child. That was not good. If they began to think of him in any other way it spelled trouble. Outwardly not a thing was showing, apart from the fact that his twinkle had change from good-natured to furious. But only very few people knew the difference.

"Very well. Let us continue. Severus brought back some worrying news. It seems a new threat has shown. Severus, if you would?"

"Of course."

The potions master looked still a bit mad at being scolded like a child.

"The Dark Lord has not been happy. You should know that he has been searching for some books on Black Magic."

He ignored the shudder that went through the group.

"So far he, or rather Lucius, hasn't had any luck with that. But yesterday somebody destroyed the most powerful of those books remaining in not only in Britain, but in the whole of Europe. He was furious at being ultimately denied the knowledge, especially as nobody should have the power or knowledge to be able to pull that off. Additionally he stated that he had felt a shift in the ambient magic of Britain, one that did not bode well for him. But no one has been able to confirm that. He also has some problem with the recruiting of the dark creatures and other magical beings. The centaurs have flat out refused him."

Again it was silent in the kitchen. It was good that You-know-who wasn't getting anywhere. But a new player in the war was worrying.

"Well, at least he is on the light side. We should get who ever it may be into the Order."

The Order member was silenced with a gaze from Dumbledore.

"I disagree. It's much more possible that we have another dark wizard, maybe even a dark lord on our hands."

A low murmur developed. And again it was Mad-eye Moody who spoke up.

"No evil wizard would and could ever destroy a book on Black Magic, Albus. You know that it isn't possible to do holy magic if your soul is already that twisted. Not to speak of the fact that the needed runic magic has been lost and the few holy circles left can not be powered by anyone with evil intent, such as a dark lord or a dark wizard without conscience."

The old wizard heaved a sigh.

"Why do they seem to only disagree with me today? What am I doing

wrong? If I say it is a dark wizard, than it is a dark wizard. And why distinguish between dark and evil? They are one and the same.'

Out aloud he said: "You are right of course, Alastor. I seem to be a bit under the weather lately. Forgive me. Now, if there aren't any other pressing news," here he look around, "than I would like to come to one last point before we go over your new tasks. Bill. I heard that Gringotts closed down yesterday for an hour or two. Could you please enlighten us as to what happened?"

"Certainly, Headmaster. Yesterday morning there was some commotion and about two hours after that the managers came out of their meetings with smiles on their faces. At first I couldn't get anything on the reason for that, but when the bank was closed there was a meeting for all employees. Are you familiar with the concept of muggle credit cards?"

The young redhead received some non-plussed looks and head shakes. The only ones nodding were Tonks and a few other members that had grown up in the muggle world.

"The muggles use them for business. You can simply shift the needed amount of money from one account to another and get cash from machines placed all over each village and city in almost the whole world. Different currencies don't matter anymore. It simplifies a lot of things. The concept was apparently brought to the goblins attention and promptly enacted. All around the world. The meeting informed us of the policy and the business increase the cards would bring. Judging from their expressions the close up wouldn't loose them too much, if it meant getting the concept to work immediately. Thankfully it also means that the goblins do not have any inclination of following You-know-who, as the cards are most useful for muggleborns and halfbloods."

Excited chatter broke out around the room. That was good news. Even if the real meaning was lost to most of them. Again, nobody

could read the old headmasters thoughts on his face. He was stewing in his anger. Another person had gained the goblins a good business deal and gained influence over them. If he ever found out who had told them he would have them in Azkaban for this. Nothing was going to plan anymore. He was at a huge disadvantage now, because of some upstart mudblood.

"Good. Then we can continue on to your new tasks. Those of you who have permanent tasks can leave already. Now, Emeline, I need you to..."

Outside, Moody and McGonagall shared a look. Shacklebolt took Tonks arm and Remus was dragged along by Moody.

"We need to talk with you. Both of you."

Walking up the stairs they didn't see Bill Weasley following them.

Chapter 8

When Harry woke up on Sunday morning, he was surprised to see that the black owl was still in his room. Even more so, as Hedwig seemed to have taken a liking to it. They slept peacefully next to each other with their heads under their wings. He didn't want to disturb them, but felt the need to get up and going. So he moved silently through his room and got ready for his time jump. It couldn't be later than half past six and the air coming in through the window was still cool. He would have more than enough time to work on the laboratory before his past self would come into the trunk to unpack the books. He scooped up his plans and slung the chain of the time-turner over his head. Then he turned the hourglass one time.

Harry noticed his mistake the moment he appeared in the past. The room was occupied. Thankfully he hadn't made any noise yet. The Harry that would go back for the Diagon Alley trip was sleeping peacefully in his makeshift bed. In Dudley's old room he knew he would find the Harry that had already gotten back from the shopping trip and would decorate the house today. Because of the early time both were still sleeping. He would need to schedule the time jumps more precisely. It wouldn't do to run into one of his past or future selves lest he attract the attention of his guards, even if it could make for some interesting dueling training later on. He slinked silently into the other room and into the trunk, where he immediately relocated into the workrooms.

The first thing he did was cutting off samples from every single wooden board he had, leaving them all at the same length. Then he went into the laboratory and closed the door behind him. Harry knew that wouldn't need that much wood for the transfiguration of shelves and cupboards, but the unnecessary samples he would use for other things. As he looked around the stone room he suddenly knew that this wouldn't be finished today. The image floating around his mind was that of a muggle chemistry laboratory, with tables and work spaces made from resistant matter instead of wood and stone. And

he knew that he couldn't transfigure those, because he didn't have a sample and there wasn't an incantation for muggle advanced plastics and ceramics. He would either have to obtain some over the internet, which was not such a bad idea – for glass and other smaller equipment – or go to the high school laboratory to duplicate a table and take it with him. Whatever he did, it would take some time.

But first, he would make some cupboards for his ingredients and his finished potions, as well as a shelf for some potions and chemistry books. Hopefully he could connect the shelf to the library and make an extra index for his potions and chemistry texts. Harry used cherry wood for the potions cupboards and book shelf and beech wood for the ingredient cupboards. He knew perfectly well that some ingredients and potions didn't tolerate exposure to light over long time periods well, so he couldn't integrate glass into the doors. Later on there would probably be need for more cupboards, but that wasn't really a problem. The ingredient cupboards he divided into plant and animal parts, then subdivided and labeled them in alphabetical order with the help of the owl order catalogue that he fetched from the storeroom for the purpose.

By now it was already mid morning, and Harry decided to begin furnishing his bedroom, as he couldn't begin working on the library or the den until his past self left the trunk. He knew the integral parts of a stable bed from the times he had to put another one together for Dudley as he broke through his old one and was therefore quickly done with the frame. As he remembered that he didn't have any sheets, blankets or pillows he sighed. While he could transfigure all of these items, in those cases the originals were of better quality. They would hold for a much longer time if made the normal way. Which was the number one reason for the fact the wizarding world did have clothing stores and the like. If you wanted special furniture you went directly to a carpenter or a muggle store – well, only if couldn't transfigure them yourself or were too snobbish to do so. There were not that many people who had the natural talent needed to make good quality furniture out of wood samples. Harry was lucky

to have at least partially inherited his fathers gift for transfiguration and to have enough raw power to pull it off. The bigger and more elaborate the piece of furniture the more difficult it was to make. If you tried to make the thing in one go. But for some reason, wizards and witches were so shortsighted that they didn't even try and make several smaller pieces to put together. Which, at least in Harry's opinion, was utter folly. Common sense seemed often times not to be a part of the vocabulary of magical people.

Another thing he needed to buy. And this he couldn't do over the internet. He would have to do it himself, to be sure he got exactly what he wanted. But Harry didn't really want to leave the wards again so soon. While he didn't like being caged like an animal, he also knew that he wasn't safe outside of them. The anxiety he had felt on his shopping trip to Diagon despite the disguise had been immense. But he seemingly couldn't get around it. The duplication spell his parents had left him for the bookcases would thankfully take care of the mattresses for the rest of the house, so he didn't have to worry about that. He only wished he had known that spell when he had copied the volumes in the Hogwarts library, because those were timed copies. They would expire at the end of the holidays as that was the longest he could make them last. The duplication spell he had used for the bookcases seemed to be a family secret, used to make an exact copy, down to the wards and other magic applied. And it got around copyright spells - which was a big plus. On the other hand: the nastier curses on some books would also be copied.

Harry sighed. He had to go soon, if he wanted to have any chance that the shops in Surrey were still open, it was after all a Saturday. So he went for his invisibility cloak, but decided to wait until he knew his past self safely in the backyard with Tonks. Instead he took the samples and went into the livingroom of his trunk after quick tempus. His past self was already remodeling the ground floor. The table he made with the same features as the one in the den of Number 4, then he added some shelves around the room and a small cupboard for a TV and DVD-player. He left some space for a fireplace as he simply

loved staring into the flickering flames. It soothed him a great deal, not to mention it made for a comfy atmosphere. He decided to leave the armchairs and sofas for later and entered the kitchen to equip it with an eating table and some chairs. As this was done easily enough and he had gotten a good deal of experience in the last few days, he had still a lot of time to spare 'til he could head out.

Remembering he had more than just potion ingredients and books to put away, Harry retrieved his clothes and began to sort them into the appropriate parts of his closet. He distinguished between magical and muggle clothing in this task, as to easier find the correct clothes for every occasion. Deeming the time right for his excursion after that, he slung his cloak around his shoulders and put the hood up to vanish into thin air.

His past self was still talking to Tonks when he came back. He had found all he had needed in time before the shops closed. Even two nice hard mattresses and a dark alley to shrink his purchases down. The expression on the face of the shop assistant had been rather comical when Harry had told him that no, he wasn't joking about the matter. After all the years in his cupboard and later on the threadbare mattress in Dudley's second room he just wasn't able to sleep properly on the overly soft mattresses most people seemed to prefer. Hogwarts was just like that and he could no longer count the nights he had lain awake because of that. On the other nights his nightmares had done nothing to improve his rest. The last few nights of sleep were among the best he could remember. He went straight back into the trunk and finished his bed. Queen sized, it stood on a low platform and was now done up in black and deep purple silk sheets and bedding. He made a mental note to charm the ceiling with a look of a cloudless night sky over an unpopulated region (to allow for a better view of the stars) as soon as he found the necessary spell.

Now Harry was ready to sort the rest of his books and give the books from the Hogwarts library a temporary home in one of his bookcases.

He would have to make duplicates from the originals, otherwise the duplicates would puff out of existence at the same time as the copies he already had. The first thing he did however, was to connect one bookcase to the second compartment of the trunk. In that bookcase he placed the index, the manuals and the owl order catalogues. The books would now appear in the special bookcase when he selected them in the catalogue while outside the trunk. Having done that he made short work of the rest of his magical and muggle books, before he went to the storeroom to fetch the Hogwarts books. Those were sorted into a special bookcase that he adjusted to his needs with the help of his parents manual for cases like this. Still, he felt almost restless as he created a desk out of the wood samples he had brought, along with a nice, comfy chair. Then he lowered the floor before the long wall with the portal and brought the desk and chair over to one side and created some cushions and pillows in the other. To charm the wall the way he wanted to was still way of - the charms he needed for that were even more complicated than the ones he would use for the night sky over his bed.

When he was finally satisfied with his reading corner, Harry fetched his schoolbooks, notes and some muggle notebooks as well as some pens and different colored inks. Making several lap desks of the magical variety – hovering and without legs – for easier access to his books and as firm pad for his notebooks, he settled comfortably into the pillows and began the lengthy task of rereading his books, taking notes along the way on every detail he deemed important. It was early in the evening before he stopped, his growling stomach reminding him of the fact that he had not had any lunch. He went outside and down to the kitchen. His past self was still immersed in his mind when he pulled out some rolls, cheese and sausage. After he thought about it, he also took some fruits and vegetables, to store them in the kitchen of his trunk. Then he made himself some sandwiches, fetched the book on household charms from the library to charm some of the kitchen cupboards to do the same as a fridge and a freezer, as both were not known to the magical world.

To his surprise, he also found some charms that would put a stasis on fruits, vegetables and other perishables so they would be in the exact same state upon retrieving them, as they were in when putting them away. It was astonishing what the wizarding world sometimes came up with.

'You have to give them one thing. The way they achieve things is more often than not easier than the muggle way. If I think of all the chemicals muggles put in and on food to keep it fresh for a long time or free from vermin... Brr. The things I bought Friday were cultivated biologically and you can really taste it.'

Harry decided to bring down the spare package of camping dishes and cutlery, and to duplicate all other kitchenware he had. As he looked around, he saw a place to put a small shelf for cooking books and one for spices. He would put them there the next time he came into the kitchen.

Then he took his sandwiches with him to the library and continued his studies while munching them. It was a few hours later when a slight cramp in his right hand brought him out of his studying. He had read his Herbology, History and Astronomy texts first, as they contained mostly theory. That he followed with his Potions text. The notes he had taken were extensive and now his hand just wouldn't stand for it anymore. He hadn't changed positions for at least two hours and his whole body was so stiff he had trouble getting up. Now he collected his things and went to his bedroom, making a pit stop in the storeroom for some soap, shampoo and towels. He was thankful that he had thought to also create a small sideboard and a nightstand in the morning and put his belongings down on the sideboard. Then he collected a bathrobe and marched straight into the bathroom with his soap, shampoo and towels.

Harry turned the tap for the Jacuzzi on and waited for the warm water to fill the tub. Meanwhile he got rid of his clothes, ironically the same ones he had worn to Diagon Alley and yesterday, some of Dudley's

cast-offs. They would have warded off any suspicions the Order members could have had about them, as they were easily recognizable even in their shrunken condition. But now he felt rather filthy, despite the shower and the cleaning charms on the clothes. He put them in the hamper and stepped into the now filled tub, turning of the tap and the jets on. It was pure bliss, he decided. He could literally feel the soreness bleeding out of his body, soothed by the warm water.

The thought that he hadn't put the potion ingredients away crossed his mind, but he mentally shrugged.

'Oh well. There is always tomorrow. It wasn't that urgent. They won't come to harm in their packages. I'll just do it first thing tomorrow morning. Then I'll work on the details for the time jumps and my timetable for studying. From first year the remaining books are Transfiguration, Charms and Defense. The last two I only need to skim, 'cause I already did the intensive learning throughout the years. But I'll need to find a way to get all my notes organized into notebooks and to sort the information in the other notebooks. If I have to leaf through the whole thing to find something specific, I could just as well take the book. The charms on the library index should be able to help me at least partially with that.'

Having settled that, he lathered his hair with lemongrass shampoo and washed his body. When the last suds were rinsed from his hair, he climbed out of the tub and dried off before wrapping himself into his bathrobe. He pulled the plug and left the Jacuzzi to empty itself.

In the bedroom he selected some underwear, then opted to sleep in Dudley's old room, as he had forgotten to look for the charm that lit the room and a simple nox was not sufficient to put the light out. Apart from that, even if it had worked, there would have been complete darkness in the room. Not something he liked overly much. Climbing into the makeshift bed once again, he dived into his mind and strengthened the shield, before finally going to sleep.

In London a redhead was wondering just why the ex-auror hadn't picked up on his following the party of five.

'Or does he just not say anything? Maybe he thinks that I should hear whatever they have to discuss?'

Silently he sneaked after them. Up to the second floor, through the corridor and... he stopped before entering the room they had gone into. That would have been just plain old stupid. Bill waited a moment for Moody to call to him or for some privacy and silencing spells to be thrown up. Neither happened. The only thing he could hear were the slightly disgruntled voices of Remus and Tonks. When Moody told them to be quiet and listen he was a bit torn. But as the conversations began to drift a certain way and he overheard a whisper between the two not involved in it, he decided to intervene. It was not in their nature to be this careless, even in or more likely especially in a location packed with Order members. Silently he moved to the door, peeked in and coughed to get their attention as soon as he realized that they had not tried to set him up.

The five inside the room jumped in surprise and Moody let out a string of curses as he noticed that he had gone against his own first principle of constant vigilance. To not even close the door and throw a basic privacy charm and proximity ward up had been utterly foolish. As he saw the redhead peeking in through the open door, he didn't know if the event was a curse or a blessing. The ex-auror knew perfectly well that the Molly and Arthur Weasley were blind to all of Dumbledore's transgressions and almost fanatically loyal to him. As of right now the question was if their oldest son shared that opinion. He waited with baited breath as Bill slowly entered the room and closed the door after him, throwing up a multitude of wards to guarantee that they would not be overheard again.

While Tonks and Remus were a bit dumbfounded at the commotion

the interruption had caused, both McGonagall and Shacklebolt had been shocked into silence. At first that is. Now they were pacing in the room like caged animals, occasionally shooting a mistrustful look at the redhead. Who had at a slight smirk gracing his face at that particular sight.

As Bill leaned back against the warded door, he decided to make the first move. After he had heard the whispers accompanying the conversation he had interrupted, he knew that at least three of these people did not trust Dumbledore as far as they could throw him. The other two were seemingly sympathetic, if their recent actions were anything to go by, and about to be introduced to the more severe real situation.

'Just the people I needed to talk to. If anybody should be informed about the goblin situation it is them. They should be able to understand – and it will be good to finally have someone other than Charlie to talk to.'

"Why don't you continue that conversation, now that you won't be overheard, Mad-eye? It was just getting interesting. After you have finished, I would like to tell you something that I didn't tell Dumbledore. It concerns the goblins and some things that have apparently been overlooked by you and your companions. If you decide after that, that I'm not trustworthy you can still obliviate me. How's that sound, hmm?"

"Wipe that smug look out of your face, boy. Who's to say that you don't spy for the Headmaster?"

"After I decided to make myself known to you when I could have stayed in the shadows and simply listen to your conversation? And found a better setting for an infiltration afterwards? You have to be kidding. I'll share my opinion with you – after you have told Remus and Tonks what this is all about. Scan me, if you think I have listening charms or something else on me."

The ex-auror promptly took this as his cue and fired a barrage of spells at the oldest Weasley child. Having checked three separate times for anything he could think of, Moody grudgingly declared the redhead spell free and safe to talk to – for now. A quick look to his companions assured him that they would keep an eye on him and evaluate everything he said carefully. A short, whispered discussion later it was the Transfigurations teacher who began to speak.

"Now that we are sure that we won't be interrupted again, we can finally talk about the reason we brought you up here. Remus, Tonks, you two have changed in your behavior towards Albus. You seem to be more critical of the things he says and does. Don't look so alarmed, we only want to know what changed."

The werewolf and the young auror looked at each other. They were silently debating if they should trust the people they were facing. They had had a talk after Sirius' death and had come to an understanding and a tentative friendship as opposed to the working relationship before the incident. When Tonks tilted her head slightly, Remus nodded.

"There are several reasons. But the root are Sirius and Harry. See, Sirius was slowly going mad here, being caged in this infernal house like an animal by Dumbledore's will, even if it was Sirius who allowed him to use it. Sirius was suspicious of the way Albus has treated Harry over the years, especially after he got an account of Harry's life from him. There was a huge difference to what Albus always told us. I don't know everything, but he tried to get Harry away from his relatives and not only because of their treatment of him. He told me that there are some blood wards around this house and he knew a bit about them. It seems, that blood wards are stronger with a godparent or someone approved by them than they are with blood relatives, if the parents are dead. It is a bit contradictional, I know, but the bond between godparent and godchild is the reason. It would not have been a problem for Harry to stay here over the summer with Sirius,

under Fidelius with Albus as secret keeper no less. He still refused without a reason other than that he wouldn't be safe anywhere but at Privet Drive. Considering how his relatives feel about him that particular statement is a bit of a laugh. Then there is the fact that he has right out forbidden us to contact Harry, as you heard downstairs. At a time when Harry would need us all the more, he cuts us off from him. Harry is the only thing I have left and for Tonks he is like a cousin or godbrother because of Sirius. Take that and add Albus recent behavior concerning Harry and you have yourself some very good reasons to be suspicious."

Remus was breathing heavily when he finished speaking, the emotions it had brought up were having an effect on him. He quietly walked over to the sofa that was located in the room and sat down, leaning back and closing his eyes to calm down. It wouldn't do any good if he were to lose his cool completely. Tonks walked over to him and sat beside him before she began to speak.

"You heard that I talked to Harry after he invited me for lunch, yes? We did cover a good deal of different topics, but the main things we talked about were the Dursley's and surprisingly Sirius. That reminds me, Remus: he wants to talk to you when you are on guard duty. He has helped me a great deal to come to terms with Sirius death, it should do you a world of good. Especially as you and Harry were closer to him than I, in a way. Well, what he told me about the Dursley's had me reeling. We only touched the surface there, but it was bad. I don't even think Sirius knew exactly how badly they treated him. And never once has someone of our world checked up on him in all that time before Hogwarts. I know Arabella lives there, but she only had him over for babysitting and some chores. She never showed any interest in taking a closer look. The worst is what he doesn't say, not the things you can gather from the tit-bits he lets slip. It woke me up enough to not tolerate anyone berating me for illusional offences anymore. Even if it is Albus Dumbledore."

Alastor Moody, Minerva McGonagall and Kingsley Shacklebolt were

silent. Some of the information they had received was new even for them. They had thought that they had been able to stall the worst of the schemes, but seemingly it was not so. Somehow they had a feeling it would get worse. After having shared a look out of narrowed eyes between them, they turned to the young redhead who was still leaning against the door. He only arched an eyebrow and shrugged his shoulders.

"It does not shock me, if that is what you want to know. You better tell them the rest, because what I have to tell you would shock them senseless otherwise. I heard enough of Harry's escapades from my siblings as not to take Dumbledore at face value, even if I didn't have other reasons before that not to trust what he says."

That statement managed to silence the three conspirators even further. This wasn't turning out the way they had wanted! It seemed there would be a lot more information and unethical behavior on Dumbledore's behalf unearthed than they had anticipated. The things the redhead had to say didn't bode well for all of them. The fact that he wasn't even fazed by the admissions Tonks and Remus had given was unsettling. In the end it was Moody who spoke up.

"Well, we brought the two of you here, because with your recent attitude there are two things you need to know - and it just so happens that it would be in our favor if you would agree to help us. Firstly, you need to tone it down. We know very well that Albus is more than just a bit in the wrong. Problem is, you will lose your reputation with the rest of the order and any sway you might have on his decisions if you snub him too often. It also puts you out of the information loop. Secondly, we are working on disturbing his schemes without him knowing it. The better part of the wizarding world seems to be absolutely blind concerning the man that is under the grandfather façade – and ironically that includes Voldemort and his Death Eaters. We would like it very much if you would join us in that endeavor."

Moody took a deep breath, but Shacklebolt beat him to the next part. The two on the couch meanwhile had weird expressions on their faces. They couldn't decide if the whole scenario was for real.

"The ministry is utterly incompetent under Fudge, he is more of a hindrance than of use. Under his management corruption and nepotism have flourished beyond belief. Unfortunately that includes the Department of Magical Law Enforcement at least partially, the standards have gradually dropped down and most of them couldn't find their way out of a wet paper bag, much less fight. The ministry is absolutely useless against Voldemort, but they manage to stall some of Dumbledore's plots just fine in their incompetence. However the problem arises the moment forces and support of every kind are needed. The more experienced aurors take a position a bit different. In the last war they allied themselves with the Order and they – as a faction - have gained the support of a lot of the disillusioned younger aurors and a even some Unspeakables. They do not want to ally themselves to the Order because all of them have seen a decline in Dumbledore.

Finally the Transfigurations teacher decided to take the word. She was a bit nervous and paced around the room. Had she been in her animagus form her tail would have swished furiously from one side to the other.

"I have known Albus for most of my live, I was apprenticed under him. He has changed a good deal over the past few decades. Poppy and Alastor can testify to that, they have known him equally as long if not longer than me. We are not quite sure when it began, but it was before You-know-who's first reign and even as far back as Grindelwald's defeat. We are also not sure just what triggered the changes in the first place. It took all of us a good deal of time to notice and admit to these changes. Of course we hope that it was magic that is responsible for the changes, because that means it could be reversible and that we can not hold him accountable for everything he has done. The chances for that are however rather

slim, as we have not found anything to support that theory – and we have been at this for more than a decade. Lately his behavior has been more erratic and questionable than ever, he seems easily angered and rationality is thrown out of the proverbial window. Add to that the fact that he is obsessed with Harry and is painting a very false picture of him to anyone who could maybe help the boy... Even if confronted with longtime friends or common knowledge he acts more than a little bit odd. It is disconcerting to say the least and we could very much use your help to prevent anything worse happening. What do you say, Remus? Tonks?"

She looked at the duo on the couch as they whispered to each other. Their faces did not betray their emotions, but they were easily seen in their eyes as they turned around to face the four waiting people. There was sorrow, anger, determination and even some helplessness.

"Before we decide, Minerva, we would like to hear what Bill has to say. All these facts have shocked us quite a bit, but he still isn't fazed. He seemed to know about what you wanted from us, even if he is not part of your group."

The realization of that particular truth hit the elder witch and the two wizards like a ton of bricks. They whirled around to look in the expressionless face of Bill Weasley. He still hadn't move from the door and was staring coolly at them. Nothing about him told of the earth shattering revelations he had witnessed. Then again, if set into correlation to the things he was about to reveal to them... He finally decided to inform them about the things that had been weighing heavily on his conscience for some time.

"You know, of course, that in working for Gringotts one has to swear an oath of loyalty to the goblins. You also know that Dumbledore told me to spy on the goblins and reveal knowledge that I had been trusted with. I did not do that, but provided him with background information that any outsider could have gathered with time. It might

surprise you, but the only reason I joined the Order, was to be able to fight You-know-who and protect my siblings and parents. I knew beforehand that Dumbledore wasn't trustworthy."

Bill took a deep breath before he continued. His voice was darkened by sadness as he spoke.

"Over the few years I have worked for the goblins, I learned a good deal about them, their laws and the behavior some people show towards them. I learned of several case in which Dumbledore has directly broken the law – and I mean both ministry and goblin law. Cases were he overstepped his rights, cases were he tried to usurp positions he was not entitled to, the same goes for money and inheritances. In other words, he tried to commit theft of truly giant proportions. He tried to gain control over estates – the Potter estate is included in this, he tried that several times – and made arrangements for testaments to be ignored, wills to never be read, etc... I'm sure you get the drift."

The pure horror that showed in his companions faces gave Bill a perverse satisfaction. They had probably had at least an inkling about some of the things he had mentioned, but had not even in their worst nightmares thought about the proportions of the things he had revealed to them. It needed to be brought out in the open though. Otherwise they would never gain any leverage over the wily old man.

"Not all of this was known to me prior to the meeting yesterday. Just before the shut-down was announced, I saw a young man come out of the estate manager section of Gringotts. He was younger than I, maybe in his mid teens, had reddish blond hair and black robes on. I noticed it, because he greeted the goblin at the information terminal when he left. But what surprised me even more was the goblins behavior. He smiled and nodded a greeting back."

This statement drew gasps of surprise from the other five people in the room.

"The senior employees had been acting oddly since about two hours earlier, having satisfied grins plastered on their faces. At that point in time I did not connect those events, but I am reasonably sure that he was the one responsible for the invention of magical credit cards. After thinking about it after the announcement, I decided to speak to my boss concerning Dumbledore. I had only been aware of minor transgressions on his behalf, making him a persona non grata with the goblins, which had raised my mistrust. My boss assured me of the fact that they were not allying themselves with You-know-who. Then he continued to fill me in on the real amount of illegal activities Dumbledore had committed. All of the people he slighted with his actions however did not want to do anything about it – he is after all the great Albus Dumbledore."

This drew muttered derogatory comments from his companions. Bill chuckled darkly. "Yeah. That was exactly my reaction. The goblins couldn't do anything about that. It seems however that now someone has come of age and learned about Dumbledore's manipulations. I have never seen a more feral expression on a goblins face than at the moment when my boss told me that this one had absolutely no qualms about suing Dumbledore for every single thing he did and tried to do to him. And that they were attempting to get others to join into the law suit on that grounds. I was told that even if no other joined the suit, there was enough material there to get him thrown into Azkaban for a really long time. You might be interested in the fact that Charlie knows about this and is completely of my opinion. We joined the Order to keep an eye on everything and because nobody else is effectively fighting against HIM."

As he finally finished speaking, Bill's throat was parched. He felt a bit exhausted after unveiling everything to them, but oddly giddy at the same time. Maybe now he could get a bit of rest away from the dreams that haunted him every other night. The silence in the small room was not breached for quite some time. At long last it was Tonks who broke through their gloomy thoughts.

"I think I can speak for Remus also, if I say that we will help you in every way we can. I do not doubt that what you said is true, but it does bring up the question if Dumbledore has done this to us too, behind our backs. As we are Order members, he could have easily used that to gain advantages over us. The most concerning, I think, is Harry's situation in all of this. I somehow think that he has probably suffered the most under Dumbledore's actions, especially if you include his obsession with him. We cannot go against the Headmaster in all of this openly. But we should evaluate our situations and try to help Harry as best as we can without garnering suspicions."

After that new development all six of them sat together and discussed their situations for hours on end. They did not come to a final conclusion, but ensured that they had secure means of reaching one another if need be. And they put the knowledge they had gained under a selective secrecy charm. It simply wouldn't do for the object of all their mistrustful interest to become privy to their double play by legilimency or a conversation held in the wrong audience.

Chapter 9

His mind was hazy when he started to wake up. Outside he could hear the bells ringing for the morning mass, reminding him that it was Sunday. Harry sighed. For once he didn't want to get up, as he had slept very well. This was the fifth time in a row, but unlike the last few days he was in no hurry to actually rise. He had more than enough time on his hands to laze about for a bit.

When he finally decided to get up, driven by his growling stomach, it was half past ten. He made his way into the bathroom to take a shower, still yawning. After that he decided to eat some strawberries, raspberries and other fruits for breakfast. He was munching on a pear as he went back upstairs to finally draw up a timetable for the next two weeks. Harry was absolutely sure that he would forget something, like learning for a certain exam or even attending it, if he didn't do that. He also didn't want the Order members getting too suspicious from seeing him in two different places at the same time. And if Moody happened to look at the house right now... Well, he could explain the absence of his relatives, but the fact that the house was devoid of about all its furniture? Not bloody likely. It was fortunate that it hadn't already happened.

After he had his timetable ready, he sighed. It looked pretty full. And he noticed that he had an OWL-exam everyday in the coming week. Not to mention that Remus would be there on Tuesday. But, Harry assured himself, he would manage. This schedule was nothing compared to the chore-lists that he had been given when he was younger. Now, that had been really difficult if not impossible to achieve. He opted to do the OWLs on the first repetition of each day, that way nobody, meaning the Order guards, would notice anything amiss.

Today he would fix up the first floor, in other words, in the evening he would have four bedrooms to choose from and the master bathroom would be much more comfortable. But before he would begin with

that task, he would clean up the rest of the garden – despite the fact that it was Sunday. As he went to get the lawn mower, Harry's thoughts turned once again to his parents werewolf friend. Despite the fact that he had told Tonks that he wanted to talk to Remus, he didn't really know how to go about the upcoming talk. Sure, Remus had taught him how to do a Patronus, but after Sirius had been back any relationship they might have had had been cast aside. The man had been there alright, but only in his capacity as Sirius' closest living friend.

Now that Sirius wasn't there any more, it cast both of them adrift. And they didn't know each other well enough as to call themselves friends. Sure, Harry wanted to call Remus a friend, but at the moment, he feared that the werewolf might be blaming him for Sirius death. All this made him rather anxious regarding the talk they would have. Even if that talk was to help Remus accept Sirius death better, to help let go of a part of the grief and to form a friendship between the two of them. The other part of his worries was the fact that he didn't know just how much Remus trusted Dumbledore. The Headmaster had allowed him to attend Hogwarts, later on even to teach. All the favors the old coot had done the werewolf made him even more of an unknown than Snape. And for Harry's peace of mind that was not good. If he trusted the wrong person now, he would loose everything that had lately happened in his favor.

In the haze of his thoughts he didn't even notice that he had already finished the mowing of the lawn. What snapped him finally out of his daze was the noise the mower made as it came up empty, with no more grass to cut. Harry shook his head.

'Well, I should probably pay a little more attention to what I'm doing. I could have just as well mowed my own feet or one of the flowerbeds. That would have either hurt hideously or made a hell of a lot more work for me.'

As he brought the mower back into the shed he took a good look

around the garden in general. There were a lot of weeds between the flowers, despite the work he had already done. The grass seemed to thin out in some places and the hedge that separated the backyard from the surrounding land was in desperate need of a trimming. All in all it looked as if the Dursley's hadn't done even a tiny bit of yard work. And because of the hot and dry weather over the past few days the earth seemed a bit dry. That meant that he had to water the garden in the evening, it was already too late for that now, he had to wait until the sun was almost down and her rays were not as intensive.

Just as he thought about a little weeding before it got too hot outside, a shrill voice broke into his quiet musing.

"Boy! Get in here now! We need something to eat, and just because you aren't hungry, it doesn't mean that we don't want something to eat either. And do remember not to make the floor dirty. If you do, you'll have to clean it up before lunch."

Harry knew that voice. He even knew that tone of voice. It didn't mean any good for him. Swallowing he yelled back: "I'm coming, Aunt Petunia!" and slowly made his way around the house and over to the back door, sneaking a look. His Aunt was just pulling her head back inside through kitchen window. Behind him there was a small rustle heard, followed by a shuffle of feet on the pavement. He had totally forgotten about his guard dogs from the Order.

Maybe that was why it didn't occur to him that his Aunt was currently somewhere on an island half a world away until he had already reached the kitchen. When he found nobody in there, he sat down heavily on one of the chairs and put his head in his hands. Had that only been an hallucination? But the guard had reacted too. When he finally lifted his head he noticed a piece of paper on the counter. On it was a short message.

You should read up on glamour charms alongside your Herbology books – I did. You also

need to do the same display I did now when you go back for the second run of today.

If no-one saw 'our' relatives they would get suspicious very soon and they needed to see you

at the same time. I'm sorry if I frightened you, but we needed a natural reaction and

this behavior is a bit too ingrained to simply shrug it off like nothing. I already made

some salad for me, well us. The rest is in the fridge.

'Future' Harry

So the him that was already living this day for a second time had decided that a sighting of his relatives was in order. Sure, it was more than just a bit suspicious if his family was absent on a Sunday after they hadn't been seen for the last few days, but had there really been the need for this... this show of conditioned reaction on his side? Angry he burned the note. Then he marched to the fridge with a scowl on his face and retrieved the salad, taking it upstairs. Somehow he needed to get rid of his anger, otherwise he could forget eating in peace.

With a flick of his wrist he had his wand in hand and cast the hovering charm on the salad bowl, then charmed it to follow him in a distance of a two feet. Then he summoned the book he had used for the remodeling of the den and went straight into the master bedroom.

A few hours later, Harry had changed all four rooms to his liking. The master bedroom closely resembled the one in his trunk, even if there were a few differences. Like the fact, that it resembled a clearing in a wood more than a bedroom. He still hadn't had time to look up the charm for the ceiling, though. And few other ideas concerning the decoration of his room had come to him, but couldn't be realized at

once. The three guest rooms were not quite that personalized, instead he had kept them in neutral tones: cream and light beige. The furniture was accordingly of a lighter colored wood. There wasn't much left to be done, only the bathroom waited to be redone and a master bathroom needed to be created. Harry had decided that the guestrooms didn't need an accompanying bathroom each.

He had been able to expel his frustration and anger at the stunt his future self had pulled through all the work he had done. Though he didn't like it, he had – after thinking about it for quite some time – come to the conclusion that it had indeed been necessary. That didn't mean he had to like it.

After he had gotten rid of his anger he had enjoyed the salad and continued on afterward. Harry was satisfied with the amount of work he had done. Of course, he had to relocate all of Dudley left-over junk and the boxes with the muggle books. They had been deposited into his new trunk for the time being. That would make it easier to put the muggle books away when he found the time to do so and had the room in the basement fit for that. Hopefully he would also find the time to sort through the rest of the junk soon.

His new trunk had found its way into the master bedroom and was at the moment used as a stand in for a wardrobe. Harry simply didn't see a reason to relocate all of his clothes, if they could be kept just as well in his trunk. He even went as far as to place a few supports on the wall, as to have his trunk level with his hips. Thankfully, lifting his trunk was not an issue anymore.

Now the only thing left on his timetable was the sorting of his potions ingredients and another study session, this time solely for Herbology and glamour charms. As he still wasn't hungry, Harry decided to finally get his ingredients in order and take his supper in the library while studying. Again. So he vanished into his trunk and retrieved the package from the apothecary. In the lab, he carefully opened it. Now

it became more apparent that the contents were in a shrunken box. He enlarged the box and began to put the ingredients away in their proper places. Never before had he been as thankful that he liked being prepared and organized and had decided to label the intended places for the ingredients beforehand. Therefore the process wasn't as tedious as it could have been, it was only time consuming.

Despite that, Harry made an impromptu revising session out of it and recalled all the details about the properties of the ingredients, the uses, the habitat and the handling instructions that he could remember. Afterwards he was a bit astounded at what he could remember even though he had paid close to no attention to this particular subject. On the other hand – the things he didn't know still held a vast majority and he had been extremely careful because of that. He decided not to put a stasis charm on the cupboards, as he wasn't sure if the ingredients wouldn't be badly influenced by that or even made unusable. That would have to wait until he had time to look it up.

Harry heaved a sigh. The list of things he wanted to look up lengthened some more with each passing day. And at the moment he couldn't see just when he would find the time to actually do something about it. As he took the wrapping paper and the box to put them into the trash bin in the workroom, his stomach grumbled a bit, reminding him that it had been a good few hours since he had lunch. Naturally he fixed himself something to eat before he retired to the library with some notebooks.

There he spread the remaining four books on Herbology around him and began to rifle through them while munching on a sandwich. Slowly he began to fill the notebooks with his writing, one for each year. After he had managed to get through about a quarter of each book, he decided to stop. It had been interesting to do the different books somewhat simultaneously. But now, Harry thought, it was time to look those glamour charms up. He would need them on the repetition of this day. As he summoned the index, he wondered if he

should make an extra notebook for all kinds of disguises. That would probably be the best. Hopefully it wouldn't take him too much longer to find what he needed. Harry yawned. He was tired. The remodeling had probably taken a lot more out of him than he had thought. He selected three different books on glamouries and other methods of magical disguises. Then he heaved a sigh and reached for a new notebook.

Hours later, it was almost eleven pm, saw an exhausted Harry Potter laying in the Jacuzzi in his trunk. He was so tired now, that he was nodding off time and again. Finally he decided to get out of the pleasantly warm water and go to bed. After drying off he put on a pair of pajama pants, went into the master bedroom and slipped under the covers and was asleep in a matter of seconds.

The next morning dawned bright and early, and Harry was sleeping peacefully until a loud crashing noise woke him rather abruptly from his slumber. Through the open window he could hear some colorful cursing from the street. Mumbling something he pulled his pillow over his head and prepared to go back to sleep. As he was almost asleep again, he was startled into wakefulness by an angry bellow that could only belong to his Uncle. Sighing he got up and cursed a moment later. A quick tempus had shown him that it was only half past six in the morning. He was just thankful that it wasn't him who had to play Vernon this morning – or the one who had made the racket in the first place. Though he could have sworn that it had to have been Tonks and her normal bout of clumsiness.

Sighing again, Harry went for a quick shower and put his clothes on. Then he collected the time-turner and vanished into his trunk. He still yawned every other minute as he collected his notebooks and went into the kitchen for some breakfast. As he munched on a piece of apple, he decided that he needed to put some cereal there, as well as some jam and honey. He needed to get away from the traditional breakfast of fried bacon and eggs that he had to make for the Dursley's in the past. All that fat still made him shudder. Once in a

while it wasn't so bad and he liked it, but every day? And Hogwarts was almost as bad in that particular respect as his relatives had been. Thankfully Hogwarts at least provided a selection of traditional English foods every day – even if it was always the same - rather than just a constant minimum standard. Nobody had to eat the same thing two days in a row if they didn't want to.

Still – it got rather old after five years. With all the house-elves at Hogwarts one would think that a bigger selection could have been provided, like American or continental breakfast at least once in a while.

'But that is just like everything else in the wizarding world. Or maybe it is just Britain and a select few other countries. They are so narrow-minded and old-fashioned, it often seems to me as if they simply stayed in the middle ages with no contact to the outside world instead of advancing. The muggles have advanced so much and instead of taking advantage of it, they just stay ignorant of things that have been around for half a century and longer. Technology could do so much for them if they assimilated it for their uses, but no... Not even Mr. Weasley, as muggle obsessed as he is, knows how to use a simple telephone or even how to spell it correctly. Sometimes I wonder if I wouldn't have been better off if I hadn't gone to Hogwarts. With the hype around me I don't know if I want to stay in the wizarding world. And I don't have a muggle education thanks to Hogwarts. Maybe I'll have to remedy that.'

Harry sighed and decided to ponder this at a later time. Right now he had to use his time-turner and complete the notes from his Herbology books. After that he could decide how long it would take him to commit everything perfectly to memory. He reckoned that it wouldn't take too long thanks to his Occlumency. Carefully he picked up the plate he had used to cut the fruits and deposited it in the sink along with the knife. Quickly cleaning them he put them on the rack to dry. Then he picked his notebooks up and went into the library. A few moments and a time-jump later he once again collected his

Herbology books and continued to work through the chapters diligently.

When the alarm he had set went off, Harry had finished his second and third year texts and was a bit more than halfway through the ones of fourth and fifth year. As he stretched, he could feel a lot of his muscles protest. Leaving the mornings work in the library, he grabbed the notebook on glamours and selected the one he wanted to use. Applying it he went outside and down to the kitchen, making a short stop in the bathroom to do a once over of himself in the form of his Aunt. It didn't take him long to make the salad and put half of it away in the fridge. Then he grabbed a pencil drew up the note he himself had already found. After he put it on the table he hesitantly opened the window. He still didn't like that he had to do this, but knew it was necessary.

"Boy! Get in here now! We need something to eat, and just because you aren't hungry, it doesn't mean that we don't want something to eat either. And do remember not to make the floor dirty. If you do, you'll have to clean it up before lunch."

Hearing his Aunts shrill voice coming out of his own mouth was by no means a nice feeling. Over the ringing in his ears he could hear his past self's faint answer. Harry winced and shut the window. Then he hurried over to the table and grabbed his portion of the salad and disappeared upstairs and back into his trunk. He knew that he now had ample time to finish his Herbology work of. With a shudder he remembered the mood he had been in after that episode. Just as well that he did not meet himself, it would not have been pretty. In the library he sat back down and continued his note-taking. It would still take more than two hours to finish up.

Once again stretching his body, Harry went and put his books away. That had taken longer than he had anticipated. He would have hurry a bit as to not meet his past self. Oh well. Nothing more to be done about it. Collecting all his stuff he exited the trunk and put all of it

away properly. He knew that he wouldn't do that with the unfinished notebooks. Taking a look around the master bedroom he noticed that there wasn't really that much in there, apart from the bed and the trunk.

'Another one of those things that can only be changed later on. The room will look the same tomorrow morning, so it'll have to wait. But I know that I will at least need some bookshelves and a desk. A perch for Hedwig wouldn't be amiss either. Hedwig... I better write some letters to my friends. I don't want Hedwig mad at me because she doesn't get something to deliver and I also don't want those two busybodies to go running to Dumbles because they think something is wrong. Not a nice thing to think... or say, but after all that happened a month ago... I still haven't put those pink glasses back on. And I need to know if my two best friends will stand with me or with the Headmaster. They will expect me to be lost in grief over Sirius and I really don't want to fake it. Damn. I should have told Tonks not to speak about my state of mind with anybody apart from Remus.'

Harry grabbed a few pieces of parchment out of his trunk along with a pen and went downstairs into the den. There were a few things he needed to tell those two, well more to the point that he didn't want anybody else to tell them before him. He should probably write to Neville, Luna and Ginny also. He put everything onto the table and sat beside it. Silently he began to compose the letters to his friends.

Dear Hermione,

To put it bluntly – how do you do? How much are you still hurt from that curse that hit you at the ministry? Are there any long-term consequences? I still feel a bit guilty for allowing you get hurt that way. On the other hand – I couldn't possibly have held you

back from following me to the ministry, could I? Have you already ranted about the fact that we didn't get any homework, because we don't know which classes we are eligible to continue? Or bought a few of the texts for sixth year that I know you wrote the titles down of? I wonder are you going away with your parents over the holidays or will you stay in Britain? As you might have guessed I'm still not in alright, but surprisingly the quiet time here has helped me more than any thing else. Most of that is connected to the fact that I chose to do a few chores to have something to do. And in addition to being able to choose what to cook I get a good amount of food for once, so I shouldn't be needing...

... you did very well at the ministry. I know that we haven't been close friends, but I still wanted to thank you for your effort. I know I didn't before. Have you spoken with your Grandmother about a new wand? Try to convince her to get you your own wand, even if she wants to have your fathers repaired for your continued usage. You will never get the best results with someone else's wand. If it helps, tell her that you don't want your fathers wand to be damaged in an accident. I also wanted to thank you for your quiet presence all over the last year. It helped to keep me relatively sane in view of the mess with Umbridge and her stupid meddling. I hope you'll write me back soon, I can use everything that keeps me from thinking about my godfather. But somehow

I think that you understand me better than Ron and Hermione ever could. In a way I'm thankful for that. It means that they have not had the misfortune to lose someone so close to their heart.

Best wishes, Harry

After Harry had put a ribbon around the last scroll he looked down at the five letters and scratched his head. There was no way in hell that Hedwig would be able to carry all the letters, despite what his trusted owl may think. Scooping the letters up he went upstairs after he turned off the light. In his old bedroom he leaned out of the window and called for his winged friend. To his surprise the ministry owl was still with her. He silently lifted an eyebrow. The reaction was a somewhat embarrassed sounding hoot from both of them. Shaking his head in amusement, he beckoned them inside.

"Now you two, listen. In a way it is fortunate that your new friend is still here, Hedwig. I have five letters for you to deliver..."

A delighted hoot interrupted Harry and he had to laugh as Hedwig jumped onto his shoulder and began to nibble lovingly on his ear.

"Yes, Hedwig, I know how much you like to deliver letters. But I'm sorry to say that you can not deliver all of them."

He shuddered slightly as a sharp nip was delivered to his ear. She was displeased all right.

"Now, Hedwig, you get to deliver the letters to Hermione, Ron and Ginny. Please wait for a reply, you know Hermione does not have an owl of her own and we don't want Pig anywhere near us, now do we?"

A screech was his answer. Somehow he hadn't expected anything

else at the mention of Ron's tiny, hyperactive owl. Hedwig had never liked the ball of feathers. Errol and Hermes also weren't dear to her. Then Harry spoke to the ministry owl. He didn't feel good about his usage of an owl obviously belonging to the ministry and he didn't entirely trust this owl yet. But Hedwig was a good judge of character.

"Would you mind much, my friend, if I sent you out to deliver the other two letters for me?"

Another delighted hoot. Again Harry wasn't really surprised.

"Very well. These go to Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood. You don't have to wait around for a reply. After that, you should probably return to the ministry. Just so you know: You are always welcome here because Hedwig likes you. And if you get around to it, I would like to know your name."

He tied a letter to each foot for both of them and then gave Hedwig the last to hold with her beak.

"Now, off with both of you. And don't tire yourselves out."

Then he watched as both owls vanished into the night. He could hear his past self rummage around the master bedroom and was just about to call it a night, when he suddenly remembered suddenly that he still needed to make a trip to the local High school. He probably should have thought of that a little earlier. He cursed silently and scuffed his foot against the floor.

"Ah, bugger. And if I don't go tonight I'll have to wait for another week and I need to make a few potions before then. Just my luck, really. Why on earth am I talking to myself?"

Ten minutes later saw him climbing out the window. It was really bad that his broom was still at Hogwarts. That would make the whole thing a good deal more difficult. Now he had to walk to Stonewall

High and back. At least he had his invisibility cloak. Harry looked around carefully, to see if he could detect his Guard. Quiet shuffling alerted him to the fact that someone was in the front yard. As Harry sneaked closer he noticed with relief that it wasn't Moody, but someone else. Someone that he wasn't familiar with as far as he could tell. Silently he moved back into the garden and onto the next property. Then he waited with baited breath, but nobody called out to him, he hadn't been noticed.

As quick and quiet as possible he went towards the street and into the night. Hopefully this stunt wouldn't cost him too much sleep. Considering the circumstances of the wake-up call he had had, it was probably a good idea to put up a silencing charm around the room he would be sleeping in. He did not want to be woken up at half past six, not if he wouldn't get to sleep until at least one am.

Everything was dark and quiet as he arrived at his destination. Harry walked quietly around the building, protected from view by his invisibility cloak. He couldn't even see an open window and he didn't want to open one of the doors on the ground floor. Quickly he levitated himself up to the roof and charmed the door there open. Then he put a silencing charm on his feet. As he wandered through the school he saw several open doors and chanced a few looks into the empty rooms. When he finally found the lab and charmed the door open, he was a bit surprised at the pristine condition the lab was in. It was not what he would have expected in a school. Not counting the fact that it seemed too empty and clean.

A few moments later it hit Harry like a ton of bricks. The summer holidays had begun! Of course, otherwise he wouldn't be here, but somehow his brain had not made the connection. He could have come here whenever he wanted and nobody would have been there apart from the janitor. This whole escapade had been utterly unnecessary! He was losing sleep over a matter he could have just as well left another day, against his earlier thoughts. He felt like hitting

his head against the next available wall a couple of times. But that wouldn't gain him anything apart from a splitting headache. It would be better if he just completed the task he had come here for and left.

So he began to make several copies of the tables and anything else that struck him as useful. He was especially delighted when he found a few catalogues for equipment and chemicals as well as a few schoolbooks. Taking a last look around he shrunk his copies and put them away in his pocket. Harry had decided not to duplicate the chemicals, because he couldn't safely transport them and he didn't know just how they reacted to magic. Those he would have to have delivered after ordering them from home.

With a sigh he locked the lab door and back-tracked his way to the roof. He felt a bit silly sneaking around, but had to fight the urge to just giggle and play hide-and-go-seek with his own shadow. Up on the roof he locked the door and levitated calmly to the ground. As he made his way home, Harry was oddly giddy and only a breath away from skipping and whistling on his way. He shuddered. He really didn't want to know what could have prompted this rather odd behavior. On his late-night walks in Hogwarts he had never felt even remotely similar. As he walked down Privet Drive he remembered only at the last moment to take the way through the backyards. Again he levitated himself up, this time though he had to get himself through the window also.

As soon as he was safely inside he felt the excitement give way to sleepiness and exhaustion. He quickly stripped down and fell into his bed as soon as he had cast the silencing charm on the room. He was asleep even before his head hit the pillow. The day had been entirely too long.

Chapter 10

Once again Harry was woken up by a loud crashing noise at half past six. For a moment he listened to the incessant cursing from outside, then he decided that he was in the mood to do some cursing himself. It was entirely too early for the time he had gone to bed at. Yawning he put on a glamour charm to look and sound like his uncle in pajamas, then he stomped down the stairs and flung the kitchen window open. Noticing Tonks in the disguise of a teenage girl, he began to chew her out in the bellow his uncle called a yell. She got paler with every second the spectacle lasted. As Harry finally closed the window with a bang, she was nearly in tears and he felt a bit guilty. But he managed to rid himself of the bad mood he had been in because he hadn't had enough sleep.

Sighing he went back into his former room and canceled the glamour. He did a quick sweep of the room, picked his clothes up and collected the time turner to put it away in the master bedroom for later use. Then he chose to go into his trunk for a bath, as his body ached a bit still from all the studying and sitting still. Before he threw his clothes in the hamper he extracted the loot from the high-school raid he had done last night and set it aside. After opening the tap in the tub he stripped down completely and sank into the warm water.

Half an hour later he dried off and went to put some fresh clothes on. Harry had decided while soaking that he would try to find a spell to add his notebooks together and put an index into the booklet it would become, as well as put preservation charms on it. After that he would go through all his Herbology notes to make sure he knew the stuff. Whistling cheerfully, his former mood reversed, he wandered off to the kitchen for some breakfast.

A batch of pancakes was quickly made and he put them on a plate with a warming charm. Then he collected some grapes, berries and cherries to go along and put them on another plate. Frowning slightly, Harry looked around the kitchen and wondered why he hadn't put

that bookshelf for cooking books in as he had wanted. He sighed, a bit put out, and decided to remedy the situation immediately. First he went to collect a matching sample of wood, then he transfigured it into a nice small bookshelf and stuck it to the kitchen wall in the designated place. That was then connected to the library with the charm he had used for the shelf compartment of his trunk. He was a bit surprised that he still remembered it, but thanked his Occlumency improved mental capabilities. It would need changing when he finally found the time to sort the muggle books.

Harry called for the book on Household charms and searched through it for a charm to get seeds and stones out of fruits without a major mess. After he memorized the charm he found, he put the book back on the shelf, scooped the plates up and left for library. There he put a hovering charm on the plates and went to collect the bookcase manual and the index. Then he settled down for another day of studying, satisfying his hunger as he went.

It was early in the afternoon before Harry stopped his study session. He was now sure that he knew the material well enough to ace the exam. He had also managed to combine his notebooks into a thin book with a magical index with the help of the manual. On the front and spine was written Herbology, years 1 – 5. Later he would add years six and seven. As he ate the last fruits, he settled on a bit of yard work for the afternoon. There was after all a practical for Herbology and the garden needed some tending to. The weeds were growing a bit too much. So he put everything in order and left the trunk, after putting on some suitable clothes for working outside.

While he worked he went over every plant that they had learned about in Herbology and revised the use of their parts in potions. Especially the influence different harvest times could have. That kept him busy while pulling weeds. Harry was sweating a bunch when he finally decided that enough was enough and went inside for a quick shower before dinner.

Half an hour later he was in the kitchen, listening to the music he played in the den. He was almost salivating at the thought of noodles with cheese sauce, cauliflower, peas and carrots. His stomach growled angrily.

'I shouldn't have ditched lunch for yard work, just because I wasn't really hungry at that time. Oh well, nothing to be done about that now. Next time I know better and dinner is almost ready too. Then I'll close the day off with a bit of stargazing and trying to remember my Astronomy lessons. And I need to set an alarm for tomorrow morning. I want to indulge in a bit of meditation and a visit in my mind before I need to go back for the Herbology exam.'

Another loud growl of his stomach brought Harry back to reality, where he switched the heat off and began to eat his meal together on his plate. He was rather happy that he made a bit more than necessary for one person, because of his massive hunger. He ended up taking seconds and even a third portion before he was sated. Thankfully, as there wasn't anymore left. A short time later, after he had cleaned everything he had used, he walked upstairs and took his Astronomy books out of the trunk, along with a couple of notebooks. Then he went inside to retrieve a few wood and metal samples. At the moment all the bedrooms held only a bed. There were no dressers, desks, chairs or closets. No possibility to put something down and leave it there for a day. In the master bedroom he had only his trunk.

Postponing his Astronomy revision, Harry quickly transfigured a functional, modern desk and two bookshelves. One for school stuff and the other for leisure reading. Then he heaved a sigh. He wanted a nice chair to go with the desk, but he didn't know enough about swivel chairs to transfigure one in pieces and naturally there wasn't an incantation. Then he decided to do something better than that. He would simply make a comfortable seat with extra cushioning charms and charmed to fit the needs of the seated person. After he had done that he put a permanent hovering charm on it and an illusion to make

it look like normal swivel chair to muggles. Proudly he examined his chair and then promptly duplicated it three times. One for each room. He brought the chairs in the designated rooms and then quickly put one bookshelf in each room as well as a desk and closet.

After he took on last look around, he left for the garden. Harry watched as the sky became darker and the first stars could be made out clearly. He searched his memory for the constellations they had been shown in lessons. At first it went slowly, but the more he searched the more he found. Apparently many things that he had thought he had forgotten were now again available to him because of his Occlumency.

'To think, that our brain seems to absorb even the most mundane things just by reading material over or listening to someone teach about it. And we can never remember that we learned in a fashion, because we lack that ability. It's almost like everyone has an eidetic memory but lacks the ability to use it and therefore thinks they never learned or forgot. Occlumency is a god send if you are taught the right way and master it. A real mastery, not a fake one.'

When he couldn't stop yawning any more, Harry got up and went inside. It was time to go to sleep. He set the magical alarm for seven am. The portkey would activate two hours later, it left him with a good amount of time. Then he put his Astronomy things on the desk and shrugged out of his clothes and into a pajama bottom. As he crawled into bed he realized that he hadn't thought about Sirius or Remus the whole day. For a moment he thought he could hear his godfather warm laugh in the breeze that came in through the open window. The happy memories of his godfather sent him to sleep, calling to his mind and snaring it into dreams of happier days.

It was still early when he was woken up the next morning. Harry yawned when he sat up in his bed and wiped the sleep from his eyes. Then he stuffed his pillow behind his back against the headboard and draped his blanket around his lower body. Then he concentrated and

dived into his own mind.

When he arrived in the big hall, he was surprised to find a few memories floating around. He wasn't quite sure why they were there. As he began to look through them, Harry noticed that they were totally random. In a way that answered his unvoiced question. These memories couldn't be automatically sorted into a category because there wasn't a fitting one yet. He sighed as he concentrated to create a place for these memories.

Once the hall was cleared, Harry decided to go outside and take a look at his shield. He could see the waves crashing onto the beach of the island through the transparent walls of his minds fortress. As he slowly walked out onto the sand the shield came into view. Harry blinked. Then blinked again. Then he began to curse. The shield wasn't as strong as he had expected it to be. Sure, it was stronger than the first time he had seen it, but only marginally. He went over the events of the past days. And cursed himself even more violently than he had the shield before. He had sworn to himself that he would spend a good deal of time every day on strengthening the shield because he needed it. Instead of doing just that, he hadn't even thought of strengthening the shield for a few days. He had simply been too busy – and had promptly overlooked one of things essential for his survival.

To make matters even worse, right now he didn't have enough time to spare to do anything about it. He needed his power for the exam and he needed to get out of his mind to get ready for that. This wasn't good. As Harry stood up from the place where he had fallen to his knees, he noticed a red shimmer. Squinting, he looked closer. All around the area he recognized as his mind, there was his shield. But all around his shield there was another one. A red shield that seemed to be impossibly strong. Noticing that he wasn't able to see every part of those shields he looked around. He knew, there was something he was overlooking. But seemingly that couldn't be helped.

Harry made his way back inside, wondering what the red shield was. Thankfully it protected his mind and shield, otherwise it would take considerable damage in an attack.

A moment later was back in control of his physical body. As he got up to shower and dress, he still couldn't keep his thoughts away from the strange red shield. He shook his head. He would have to think about it later and concentrate on the exam now. That was infinitely more important. Harry began to mentally go through every fact he knew about Herbology – again. On some level he knew he was obsessing, but somehow he couldn't help it.

When he was ready, had eaten breakfast and calmed himself down thoroughly it was already a quarter to nine. Hastily he went for his time-turner and put the chain around his neck. A moment later he found himself still in the master bedroom, but at a quarter to nine on Monday morning. Silently he wondered when he would get around to thinking of the master bedroom as his room, as he went and collected the portkey-letter from the ministry. Hopefully it wouldn't take too much longer. As he waited for the portkey to activate, Harry's thoughts went to the members of the bird club that Dumbledore officiated. Thankfully he wouldn't have to make his way to the entire ministry building, but would land in a sealed off part of the Department of Education. Nobody else but the examinees and the examiners were allowed in there.

Harry had gathered that information from a leaflet that appeared after he had keyed the letter to his own magical signature. The contents had also told him that nobody would be able to repeat who had been there because of the secrecy charms applied. He also knew that none of the examiners were part of the bird club, a fact that he was immensely thankful for. Now he knew just why he had spied on that emergency meeting of the whole Order after the ministry fiasco – apart from staking out his guards. It meant that nobody was able to take the info of him being there back to the Headmaster. Or to Voldemort for that matter. Now the only remaining problem in his plan

was the fact that he had to convince them to let him take all the exams he wanted to. He could only hope that they would accept his reasons.

At five minutes to nine he felt the portkey activate and a moment later that nauseating feeling at his naval propelled him towards his destination. He shook as he landed, but was able to save his dignity and remain on his feet. He didn't even stumble. All around him a few other people arrived. Obviously, there weren't that much home-schooled children. A few seconds later he had to revise his opinion. A second batch of teenagers arrived, followed by a third. Now there were about as many people as in his year in Hogwarts from all houses combined. As Harry looked around he was happy that his scar was covered and that he had better clothes. The absence of his glasses was also very much in his favor.

Slowly he began to make his way towards the door of the room. He had noticed that everyone had arrived inside of a small circle painted on the floor. It was a good idea to avoid the problem of several people arriving in the same spot at the same time or even after one another. That would have undoubtedly resulted in a ghastly accident. Harry noticed that most of the others were doing the same as he was. After all, the exam would start in about five minutes. He sighed and continued his way. The corridor he entered was connected to several rooms. The examiners were standing outside, checking the letters of the teenagers against a list of names. They weren't put together in one room, but separated in alphabetical order by their last names through notes on the doors.

At the other end of the corridor he noticed a woman with a badge on her robes, claiming her to be the head examiner for these exams. After hesitating for a moment he went to her. Instead of talking to each examiner per subject individually, maybe he could get his permission to retake the all uninterrupted exams from her. It was at least worth a shot.

"Excuse me?"

"Yes, what do you need Mr. ...?"

"Potter, Ma'am."

She raised an eyebrow at him. Somehow he like her reaction, most of all the fact that she didn't go ballistic with hero-worship or hatred.

"The letter I got stated that I would be able to retake any exam I wanted, as long as the reason for this was not inane and accepted by the examiner. I wanted to ask, if it was possible to get your permission to retake several exams apart from Astronomy and History instead of having to ask every single examiner, seeing as you oversee all the exams? When I took my exams at Hogwarts, the only exams that I was able to partake in to the fullest of my ability were the exams for Defense and Charms. In the others I was held back by a lack of sleep and exhaustion caused by our Defense Professor, Ms. Umbridge – who used a blood quill in her prolonged detentions given for the most inane reasons - as well as nightmares that were sent to me by You-Know-Who. Madam Pomfrey, the schools nurse gave me a dose of dreamless sleep potion the night before the Defense exam and the night before the Charms exam, but I couldn't take one before every exam because of it's addictiveness. I had thought that I would have to live with the less than satisfactory course of the tests because of that, but now I hoped that I might be allowed to retake those exams. The fact that I was trying to learn Occlumency alongside the whole time hasn't made it any better. My Occlumency shields are only now strong enough to block out any dreams sent by HIM and I have gotten a good deal of rest since I have gotten home."

She looked at him for a moment through narrowed eyes. A single strand of her chestnut hair fell into her face, only to be brushed back behind her ear immediately. She looked to be thinking about his request seriously for a bit, before she nodded.

"Yes, Mr. Potter, you may retake all of the tests apart from Charms and Defense. The dissatisfactory conduct of Ms. Umbridge is quite well known in our Department. We were incensed about most of her decrees, but weren't able to do anything about it, because she had the ministers backing. All of her decrees have been reversed and we are putting together a case against her. It would probably be good if the investigators were to speak with you at some time. Maybe after one of the exams? You'll be here quite often for the next two weeks. You should also know that this section of our department is spelled to compel the students to tell the truth and it can't be blocked by Occlumency as it doesn't directly mess with the mind, which is why I granted you inquiry. Now, hurry inside please. I'll let the other examiners know that you are permitted to retake your exams."

"Thank you, Ma'am."

Harry hurried inside the correct room, showing his letter to the examiner and seeing him look to his superior, receiving a positive nod. Her revelation had shocked him a bit, but he was jumping for joy inside his mind. There was however something that didn't sit right with him. He had told her a lot more than he had intended to and it angered him, but he also hadn't told her the full truth. That meant omission was possible, but mostly prevented by the charms they had put up. Shaking his head he decided to concentrate on the task at hand. He took one of the few still available seats. As he had entered the room he had felt the tingle of a ward washing over him. Now he looked towards the desk in front of the room expectantly. The examiners surveyed the room and the teenagers for a moment before they laid down the rules for the exams, same as in Hogwarts. Then they walked through the room, giving every person their paper. After they were through they were told to begin.

It was well into the afternoon before the practical part of the exam was over and Harry was a bit tired. He had forgotten just how tiring it could be to deal with some of the more active magical plants. Despite the few problems that had come up in the practical part, he knew that

he done very good. He had always liked gardening. Though Herbology wasn't his favorite subject and he was nowhere near as good as Neville, he didn't need to be to gain an E or even an O. And he knew that he had aced the written part of the test.

They hadn't done the practical part alone, but in groups of three. His had been one of the last and they had been dismissed just a few minutes ago. Harry had washed his hands to get the mud and earth off of them and was now on his way to the travel room, to get back home. He still had some remodeling to do, mostly in the basement. And he still wasn't in the right mind to make his way up into the attic.

As he entered the travel room he took out his letter, but nothing happened, even as he stepped into a randomly selected circle. A sigh escaped Harry as he realized that he would need to depart from the same circle he arrived in. Taking a look around, he stepped first into and then through several circles when nothing happened. Finally he managed to find the correct circle and once again he was nauseated by the pulling sensation behind his naval.

He arrived back in the master bedroom, where he put the letter away immediately. Then he decided to finally get something to eat. Thinking about it for a moment he went inside his trunk as his past self was still outside, but would come back inside the house sometime soon. And his past self would also use the kitchen downstairs. Pulling a few vegetables out of the cupboards in the kitchen he began to clean them, dicing them into strips and cubes as he went. He had done the potatoes first and put the cubes into a frying pan with a bit of oil to roast while he continued with the rest. He put the sweet peppers, celery, carrots and leek into another pan, with less heat under it.

While his dinner cooked Harry went and fetched some paper and a pen and settled down at the kitchen table. He began to make a detailed plan of the rooms he wanted in his basement. At the moment

he had five different rooms at his disposal and all of them weren't really big. One contained the washing machine and the dryer. He would have to leave that one as it was. One room was for the muggle part of his library, the second would become a potions lab, the third would be changed into a dueling chamber and the fourth would become a work-out room with probably enchanted muggle equipment.

Harry stood up and took a plate and a fork out of the cupboards, then went and put some of the potatoes and the other vegetable onto his plate. The heat was switched off and he returned to his chair. He pushed the paper and pen aside to get his plate in front of him and began to eat with enthusiasm. He would have to remember to take something to eat and drink with him for the next exam that went from morning to afternoon. It really wasn't fun to watch the others munch on their lunch while his stomach growled, because he hadn't thought of it in the first place. Thankfully they had been given a bottle of butterbeer each, that had calmed his stomach a bit.

Scooping the rest of his food out of the pans for a second helping, Harry thought about the exams that were still to come. The next was Astronomy and after that it was History. He hadn't thought that Herbology would take up so much of his time. It was already late in the afternoon and he still had to compile a five-part (note-)booklet about Astronomy. Thankfully he had already done some stargazing, but that also meant that he couldn't go out again tonight. Patting his stomach after the good meal, he decided to at least get the library part of his house ready, before he went and studied his books in depth.

After he put his plate, fork and the pans in the sink, he went directly into the library to collect the needed bookcases as well as the already much used book on remodeling. Harry would need to enlarge the room after all, as well as put some carpet in, paint the walls and ceiling in satisfactory colors and fix the lighting to his liking. It should take at least an hour of his time until it was ready and he could

continue his studying. On the other hand - that was exactly what he needed after he had exhausted his brain the exam.

It was already half past ten when Harry finally decided to put his books away and go to bed. Tonight he would sleep in his old bedroom again. He decided to forego a long soak in the Jacuzzi because of the late hour and took a quick, warm shower that only enhanced his tiredness.

As he slipped into bed, his last thought was on the realization that tomorrow he had his talk with Remus. A bit of uneasiness slipped into his already half sleeping consciousness. Pushing it away, he decided not to worry about it any more. It would happen regardless of his feelings on the situation. They could talk in the park and after that he could hopefully convince Remus to help him with his shopping. He was slowly running out of fruits and vegetables.

Just as his mind slipped away, Harry thought about his mind shield and willed his mind and magic to work on it while he slept. Tomorrow he would see if it had worked and his shield could be strengthened while he slept.

It was about 8 am on Tuesday morning when he woke up. The noise his past self made rummaging around the house while getting ready was quite loud. He would have to put up some silencing charms around the rooms to prevent exactly that happening again. Stretching a bit Harry yawned and cuddled back into his pillow and blanket. He would just lie there and enjoy the warmth. Thankfully he didn't have to get up right away. Holidays were something really nice, just like weekends only better. He didn't have to keep an eye on the clock now because Hogwarts only served breakfast so long.

When the lack of noise suggested that his past self had gone back in time he stretched again and began to meditate to go into his mind. Once he was on the beach and surveyed his shield, he noticed

immediately that it was stronger than the last time he had looked at it, but not by much. Harry sat down on the warm sand and began to work on his shield. He could feel his shield gaining strength bit by bit. It didn't take long until he had done more improvement than his unconscious mind had while he was sleeping. He got up and walked a bit to strengthen a different area.

While he was working on his shield, he noticed that his island seemed to be swimming in the ocean and that his shield apparently went all around, even under the island. That area was given an extra dose of attention. Harry really didn't want any ugly surprises because he had a hole in his shield. All the while he noticed the red shield around his own blue one. And finally the answer as to what exactly that was occurred to him. That shield came from the blood wards. It had already become stronger than the last time he saw it about 25 hours ago. He hadn't taken a look at the blood wards around the house for a few days, but if the shield was any indication they had grown quite strong over that short period of time.

'I wonder if they will keep Dumbledore out, after all he isn't really interested in my continued good health. It's rather the opposite. I'd really like to see his face if he walks into an invisible wall when he tries to enter. On the other hand I hope it doesn't happen for some time, because otherwise he will begin to undermine my protection. It could also cause a problem with Remus – he is a werewolf after all, a dark creature by ministry edict. But he doesn't have bad intentions towards me, so it should be okay.'

After he was satisfied with the strength of his shield, Harry decided to take one last look around before he went back to the outside world. In a secluded part of the island he found a black, cordlike thing. Its root seemed to be buried deeply in the sand and it went upwards and past the shields. Both shields blocked it off, but it wasn't cut off entirely. He concluded that it was his connection to Voldemort. Curious he began to carefully dig around, to eventually get a clear view of the root. He had to get a lot of sand out of the way and he

noticed with dread that the part of the connection that he freed was much larger than he had thought. It spread under the sand, outwards to the bungalow that hid the fortress in which he kept his memories.

Harry swallowed heavily as he looked at the huge black something that lay hidden in his mind. Somehow he got the feeling that he had initially gotten a lot less from Voldemort than he thought, but at the same time it seemed as if mind was slowly contaminated more and more through the link without any changes occurring. His instinct told him that he would have to do something about it very soon if he wanted to stay himself. On the other hand, the same instinct told him that it would be disastrous if tried to cut the link now. He sighed as he sat back and looked at the black thing. Then he focused on it and willed the sand away from it, beginning with the top layers.

At first nothing happened, but after a little while the sand began to move away very slowly. To Harry it felt as if had been at it for hours when he had managed to free the center from sand. There was even a bit of air under it now. He was tired, but somehow he knew that he couldn't leave his mind like that. He was much too vulnerable this way. Because of that he began to build a mind shield around the black thing, without actually coming into contact with it. He knew he wouldn't be able to encase the whole thing right now, but it would be a start. After all the work he had already done on his shield, it was easy to build a new one from scratch and connect it to the bubble shield where the link came through. Only when not even a tiny bit of the parts he had freed from the sand wasn't covered by his shield did he stop. Giving the new construct one last look he exited his mind.

Moaning, Harry lay in the bed. He was utterly exhausted and had a splitting headache. He had probably done too much in too little time. A muttered *tempus* told him that he had only spend a bit more than an hour in his mind. He didn't even notice that he hadn't used his wand for the spell, despite the fact that it still was in the holster on his forearm. As he tried to get up a wave of nausea hit him and he subsequently decided to stay in bed and take a nap to regain a bit of

his energy. He drew his blanket over his head and burrowed into the pillow. Hopefully nobody would disturb him. And Remus would have his shift in the afternoon, so there wasn't a problem there.

Incidentally, it was Harry growling stomach that woke him up. It was already early in the afternoon when he got up and took a shower. He was still a bit sleepy when he trudged down into the kitchen to make himself something to eat. Too lazy to put a great deal of thought or energy in his meal he just made himself some salad, which he devoured at the kitchen table like a starving man. Thankfully his headache had abated due to the extra sleep. But he dreaded his next session with the link.

Looking around, he decided he needed to put a clock into the kitchen at the soonest possible time. Harry sighed and went upstairs. He needed to put on something a bit more Dudley-shaped for his meeting with Remus, he didn't want anyone to become suspicious. He didn't want to have to deal with Dumbledore and his bird club just yet. It was only another 30 minutes until Remus would be there.

The hand-me-downs he owned were stared at distastefully. Then he selected some that weren't too worn and shrunk them down a bit. He could explain that away by saying he had done it at school. As Harry walked downstairs again, he wondered what would happen if he were discovered at the moment. The possibilities his fantasy supplied him with were not to his liking to say the least. A shudder ran over him and he tried to get the images out of his head. Despite the fact that he had come to terms with his godfather's death, he really didn't want to be stuck in Grimwauld Place for the rest of the summer. Especially not right under Dumbledores nose and with Mrs. Weasley as supervisor.

Sure, he liked her and he liked the fact that she treated him like one of her own sons, but sometimes that was exactly what he couldn't stand about her. She was too much of a mother hen to let him be

himself most of the time. Her recent attitude about Sirius also didn't endear her to him and the hero-worship she held for Dumbledore was too dangerous to his continued good health for his liking.

Quietly Harry closed the front door behind him and went down the driveway and sat on the sidewalk, leaning against the fence that went around the Dursleys garden. Remus was scheduled to arrive any minute now. Mentally he found himself running circles like a headless chicken, so he took a few calming breathes. It wouldn't do let his nervousness show through.

A soft pop behind him told Harry that Remus had arrived. Then he heard a bit of shuffling and another pop, this one a bit louder. He could hear steps, but they were leading away from him and up to the house. Curious, he got up and looked around for a moment. Nobody was visible in his vicinity. His voice was soft when he spoke up.

"Remus, why are you walking up to the House? I'm down here."

"Harry? Cub, what are you doing out here?"

"Waiting for you. Or can you really see my Aunt jumping for joy when I'm visited by another freak? Don't need to incur her wrath unnecessarily, now do I? Come on, we'll go down to the park. The garden really isn't available for a talk while my Aunt is at home, you know. Follow me please?"

With that he turned around from his little surveillance stunt and began to walk down the street. The park was well within the outer wards, just like the supermarket. It would be nice to sit in the shade under the trees in the park. A bit more of a neutral ground than the Dursley's garden. The pet-name that Remus had given him had assured Harry that they were okay. Now he only needed to find out exactly how much he trusted the Headmaster.

'Master of head-cases more likely. Hmm. I'm derogatory today. But

really, just how many screws do you have to have loose to make a child fight a Dark Lord? Or to put people like Quirrell and Lockhart in charge of education? Or to let some one like Umbridge have free rule? And just why am I thinking about this now? Serves to show how nervous I am!

After he had led them to a secluded clearing where they wouldn't be disturbed, Harry sat down under a huge oak tree.

"You can pull the cloak of now, Moony. Nobody is anywhere near, we won't be disturbed here. Come on, sit down in the shadow next to me. Then we can talk – before I loose my last nerve."

"A bit pushy, aren't you, Cub? But you're right. You know, I'm pretty nervous too. So, tell me, how are you. Really I mean?"

"Well, I'm not too sure about that. For a while I was really bad off, you know. I had nightmares every night while I was still at school. I couldn't think straight half of the time during the day. But the first night back I found the robe I had on that night."

"You found... Oh, Merlin! Harry, are you..."

Harry looked up into those kind amber eyes. Then he nodded and hugged the man he considered a honorary godfather. As he cuddled closer, he could admit to himself that this was something that he had needed despite the fact that he had dealt with most of the emotional backlash already. He relaxed into the embrace and continued talking.

"I'm okay. You know, I'm kinda glad that it happened. While I broke down completely, it also helped me deal with a lot of things I had buried. I feel very much better now. Not nearly as angry or choked by grief and depression as before. It was exactly what I needed, but who would have thought. I still miss him. Everyday there is something that I'd like to show him or to tell him. And it hurts that I can't. But more often now it just is a background thought. And sometimes I even get

his face with one of those insane laughs in my memory along with a comment he might have made. But, Moony, I need to know: are you angry with me? I mean, I..."

"Harry? Cub, it wasn't your fault. You know that, right?"

Harry could only nod. Yes, he knew that he only held a minimal amount of the fault. That Sirius was a grown man, making his own decisions. He had accepted it. But it was good to hear it from someone whose own grief was as big as his. Someone he trusted. Someone he loved. The strong arms around him tightened a bit.

"No, Harry, I'm not angry with you. You tried to prevent it. The action was so typically Sirius... there is nothing more to say. I was terrified when you tried to go after him, down there. I couldn't lose you too. You really are the very last member of my pack. And Siri, he was going crazy inside that house, stuck as he was. I can't say that it is for the better, but... You know what I mean, yes?"

"I do. But it will hurt for a long time to come, despite that."

Harry shuffled around a bit, until he sat with his back against the older man's chest. Then he leaned his against Remus' shoulder. It was very nice to finally have someone to hold him like this, out in the open.

"Moony?"

"Yes, Harry?"

"Will you be my honorary godfather? I know, ministry won't let you be official and I don't want you to take Sirius' place. But, after he came back, we lost the contact we established during third year. You just faded into the background. I don't want to live through that again. You are important to me. I don't want to lose you again."

"Harry... Harry, I... I'd be honored. I don't know what to say..."

A sniffle could be heard, followed by a small laugh.

"Look at me, falling apart like that. Yes, Harry. I would like that very much. I know I can't take Sirius' place, but I want to be there for you. Thank you for your trust. Now, Tonks said that..."

".. and I told her that is how I think he would want to be remembered."

"You're absolutely right. He wouldn't have wanted to have us mope around. He'd have asked us to pull a few pranks on the Order and the twins in his memory."

Harry stood up slowly and stretched. Then he gave his new godfather a hand and helped him up.

"You know, I need to go shopping before I go back. We are running out of fruit and vegetables rather fast with the amount of food Dudley and Uncle Vernon pack away. Will you keep me company? There shouldn't be too many people there."

"Of course I'll come with you. Invisible. I'll cast lightweight charms on your bags. But we need to hurry. We have talked for more than two hours, closer to three. My shift will be over soon."

"Mmm. 's okay. There is however something that I have to ask you beforehand. I want to know if Snape is on guard duty anytime soon."

"Harry? Yes, he'll be there on Friday morning. But why?"

"I want to talk to him. Could you... could you tell him? Ask him to bring a pensieve? And don't tell anyone else, please? It's important to me. I want to show him something. Please, Moony?"

The werewolf shook his head in annoyance. It didn't make any sense to him. He knew that those two couldn't be in a room together without riling each other up.

"Very well. I will. But don't come crying to me later on, okay. I know perfectly well that both of you can't stand each other. Now, let's get your shopping done, Cub."

"Thanks Moony. That means a lot to me. Heh. Race you!"

Chapter 11

Harry sighed as he closed the front door after himself. He and Remus had just come back from the shopping trip. Right in time for Remus' shift to end. He had pretended that he needed to start cooking for his relatives and had brought everything he had bought into the kitchen, not allowing Remus inside the house, telling him that he didn't want to upset the unstable truce he had with his relatives. It was just as well that a replica of his cousin Dudley had come home at the same time and that Remus, who was still under his invisibility cloak, had to get out of the way before 'Dudley' trampled over him to get inside. It was also good that he hadn't noticed that Harry could see him, despite the cloak. Just like he had seen Arthur Weasley on Saturday. His contacts really came in handy in spotting all of his guards. And he noticed that they all had a grey outline to distinguish them from normally visible people.

He felt warm inside. His last connection to his parents and Sirius had been salvaged and he had gotten a new godfather and friend out of it. The only person, apart from Tonks, who had lost as much with Sirius' death as Harry himself had held him and told him that it wasn't his fault. Sure, he had known and believed it, but it still took a burden off of him, a burden that he hadn't even known was there.

Though he felt bad about it, he hadn't dared to tell Moony about the new situation. The werewolf was simply too much of a wild card at the moment. He was too close to the old coot for comfort. Harry didn't believe that he would be betrayed by Remus, no, he feared for his own and his new godfathers safety because of Dumbledores mind reading skills. As a werewolf Moony had a natural defense, but somehow Harry had the feeling that the old man had found a way around that. It never hurt to be careful. And if Remus was concerned over his safety he would maybe still go to the Headmaster, who had been so generous to him.

Thankfully he wouldn't have that particular problem with Snape. On

the other hand: his plans with Snape were even more dangerous, because he had to actually convince the man to cooperate with him. Harry shuddered as he thought about the possible consequences if their talk went badly. That would bring both Dumbledore and Voldemort on his case. He was prepared to take that risk because he needed to end the hostilities between them, rid Snape of some of his misconceptions and he needed to show the man just how badly both of them were manipulated - if he didn't know that already. And he needed the man on his side. He had come to realize that the potions master was a brilliant man, despite his personality. To be able to stay alive this long with his occupation, he needed to be. It also had the added benefit that nobody in their right mind would suspect Harry or Snape to become allies. Their hatred for each other was famed throughout Hogwarts and beyond. Now Harry could only hope that his professor complied with his wishes despite the fact that pensieves were somewhat of a sore point between them.

Taking another look at the groceries and everything else he had bought, he put about half of it in the fridge and then took the other half of it into the trunk's kitchen. After a minute of thinking he sat down in there and looked for a charm to make sure that this kitchen would always be stocked with the things he had just brought in. While he needed to keep up pretense, he tired of having to buy as much supplies as he had had to with the Dursleys present. Thankfully he didn't have to go as often. But soon he would have to take care of himself and more than one past self. He simply didn't want to have to restock every other day.

Harry finally found what he was searching for. Seemingly the ministry thought it to be one of the darker charms, probably because it would bankrupt several people if used in general. He shook his head and applied it to his cupboards on top of the stasis charms. Another thing happily taken care of. Maybe his days would sometime soon calm down to a set schedule without things to be done before he could begin his studying in earnest instead of the revision he was doing now. It was a pity he couldn't use the charm on potion ingredients,

but because of their inherent magic that wasn't possible.

Quickly throwing something together for dinner, Harry's thoughts were not on his meal but on star constellations. Thankfully he was able to do simple meals on autopilot, otherwise he probably would have had to throw the charred remains of his meal away. As he ate, he was thankful that he had been able to make three of the booklets and was halfway through with the fourth. He only had one and a half book to take care of for Astronomy. After that he would have to begin the daunting task of going through several history books. Or maybe just through The History of Magic. But before that he would have to look up the topics of the exam. Binns only ever taught goblin wars and Harry really didn't remember much from the test sheet at his original exam in Hogwarts. Hopefully he would get through all that stuff alright, it was so dry and boring, even when it was not taught by Binns.

But history was one thing. With his Occlumency he wouldn't forget the dry material no matter what. The Potions exam the day after that was another matter altogether. Harry could freely admit that Potions was his worst course and the one he liked the least. That was due to the teacher, said teachers attitude and the Slytherins he had the lessons with. The fact that he had done his everything to really get bad, but passable grades in the subject did not help his situation any. He had never thought about the fact that he would probably need it for what ever job he choose. Now, that was another sore subject. He would need to read that book about jobs and their requirements pretty soon. And hold in mind the possibility of getting a muggle education and stay away from magical jobs.

'I will have to spend additional time on Potions. I already have a good deal of the ingredients memorized because of Herbology. But the rest of the theory and most importantly the practical part need time and practice. It would probably be for the best if I went back the whole three days after the History exam and spent all the time in the lab. If I go back Thursday morning then I'll end up back Monday

morning – for the third time. Which is perfect, 'cause I haven't been in the lab since Sunday. But I need to look up the charms for the bedroom in my trunk. I'll fix it when I'm back to Monday. And avoid going in there for now.'

A bit later Harry could be found in the library again, studying his astronomy books. Though he'd had a pretty early dinner, he knew he would be up for quite a while because he wanted to do a bit of stargazing after he finished with the theory and some star charts. It was just as well that the exam was late in the afternoon – and that he didn't have to attend the Defense exam that was scheduled for the morning. It would give him additional time to go once again through his new booklet on astronomy and begin his study on the history of the wizarding world.

Hours later it was a very tired Harry who trudged upstairs from the garden, where he had indulged himself in a bit of stargazing and day-dreaming. A few times he had felt as if Sirius had been right next to him. A lone tear made its way down the teenagers lightly tanned face. He missed his godfather very much, even though he managed to get through his days without thinking too much about it. He wanted to do his godfather proud, not mope around and drown in his grief.

As he lay down on his bed in the master bedroom he brought all the happy memories to the forefront of his mind. Slowly sinking into sleep, Harry hoped that this night would bring him happy dreams and not some of the nightmares he had experienced before his breakdown.

It was still early on Wednesday morning when Harry woke up. As a quick tempus showed, it wasn't even six am yet, but somehow Harry wasn't surprised. His rumpled sheets were testament to his fitful sleep, as was the tired feeling he was experiencing right now. Though - his sleep hadn't been plagued by nightmares, that was at least something.

Right then he decided that he wouldn't work in his mind until after the exam. If the last time was any indication he would need every little bit of concentration and power he could muster, and right now that wasn't much. And with the exam coming up he didn't have the time to take another nap afterwards and still manage to do everything he had planned. He had a busy day ahead of him. As he slowly got up and searched for his time-turner. The only thing he was going to do right now, was going back and treating himself to a long bath in his Jacuzzi, to get all the tension out of his body.

A few hours later found Harry once again sitting in the library of his trunk, leafing through his astronomy notes. When he finally closed the booklet he was sure that he knew everything they should have learned about the subject in the past five years. Then he sighed. Now he had to begin his study of wizarding history. Another sigh escaped him, he really didn't want to do this. But he had sworn to himself that he would ace his OWLs in this surprising second chance.

An unbidden thought had resided in his head for some time now: despite Hermione being one of his best friends – and he loved her dearly - he longed to show her up a bit. To show her that you didn't need to show off that you knew more than others on a daily basis. That you didn't have to make others feel inferior or nag people 24/7 about studying. And most of all to show her that he didn't need her to think for him. Lately he had felt as if she thought that he was just some dumb little boy, without the ability to think for himself. She always went on about how others knew better than himself what to do with his life.

There would be absolutely no better chance to do so than to get better results than she did. Especially considering the circumstances at the end of the last term and the fact that he had never taken some of these classes and the fact that others weren't even offered at Hogwarts. It made him want to jump around in unholy glee, even if he felt bad about it.

Feeling that he had procrastinated long enough, he went and got his course books and The History of Magic as well as the ministry guide to the topics that were tested in the OWLs. His portkey to the ministry would only activate at six pm, partly due to the subject and partly due to the fact that the defense exam beforehand would take a good deal of time. As he settled down with his books writing materials he remembered to set an alarm for himself for lunchtime. He needed to eat after all, and his cousin had to make an appearance sometime during the afternoon as well.

It was quite late when Harry finally made it home from the Astronomy exam. He was exhausted. Still, before he could get some sleep he would need to make a short visit to his mind. His mind shield needed an additional dose of strength and his link to Voldemort shouldn't be left alone for too long. He probably wouldn't get much done tonight, but he knew instinctively that he didn't have too much time left to deal with Tommy's invasion of his mind. If they became too intertwined, who knew what would happen? It could mean his own death when he managed to get Tom out of the picture. Or it could mean his own corruption by black magic – as the link they had felt vaguely like the creepy feeling he had gotten from the books in 'Ciels'. What ever the consequences were, they weren't good.

But before he could do that he needed to get some energy. His stomach was growling quite loudly about the fact that he hadn't had anything to eat since lunch. Thankfully he had made enough food for lunch and had put the remains into the fridge of the kitchen in number 4.

Strengthened, Harry made his way up to his old room and got ready for bed. Then he sat against the headboard, his blanket pooling around his waist and a breeze of cool, fresh air coming in through the open window. As soon as he had found a comfortable position, he began to dive into his own mind.

When he found himself in the confines of the large hall, he took a bit of his time and read the labels on the doors. It didn't surprise him, that the door labeled 'The Dursleys' led to the corridor that held a good amount of other doors. Here he saw doors with labels like 'Aunt Marge', 'The Normal', 'The Bad Days' and 'Harry Hunting'. It went on, but Harry really had enough of it. He would visit his personal hell another time.

Some of the other labels had him curious as well. Still, he opted to do some memory surfing at a later time – when his problems with the mind link to Voldemort weren't so pressing anymore. And he vowed that he would find a way to make sure that the labels wouldn't lead an enemy around on a visit in his mind.

Outside, on the island in his mind he noticed that his shield seemed stronger than the last time he had seen it. Obviously his unconscious mind had been at work every time he had thought about it. Which was for the better, because it meant that he could concentrate fully on his task of locating the still hidden parts of the link and isolating them. It would cost him enough strength as it was. Not to mention the fact that he also needed to power the shield around the link up.

The sight he was met with at his construction zone was not a pleasant one. Somehow a few new tentacles had grown out of the main body of the 'root'. They had penetrated the shield and were at the moment busy burrowing farther into the surrounding sand. Obviously his shield hadn't been strong enough. Harry began to build shields around the new parts and connected them to the main shield. Then he began to strengthen the shield until it was stronger than the one surrounding his mind.

It was quite exhausting work. Hopefully this new shield would hold and not allow any new tentacles to grow out of the already shielded parts of the 'root'. Taking a short breather, Harry wondered what would have happened if he hadn't fallen into his mind that first night back from school. And the consequences if he hadn't found the link

and its 'root' at all weren't pretty and had, in his opinion at least, always a lethal end. Either he would die as soon as Tom bit the dirt or he wouldn't be himself anymore and would do things he didn't even want to think about – and end up soulless in Azkaban or killed by the light side.

Then he began to shift sand away from those parts of the 'root' that were leading towards the bungalow. He had to make sure that they never reached the seat of his memories.

To Harry it seemed as if he had spent hours on the defenses of his mind when he was finally satisfied with the work he had done. Sure, he was still way off of making a shield around the whole link, but he had covered a good part of it already. He gave the link one last look and left his mind. The headache he had acquired wasn't quite as strong as the last one. He squirmed his way under the covers and curled up with his blanket wound tightly around him.

When Harry woke up on Wednesday morning for the second time that week it was already half past eight. Secure in the knowledge that there weren't any tasks that had to be done right away, he lounged in bed for an additional 30 minutes. After a quick shower he collected his plans for the remodeling of the basement and his much used book and went to work. The library had been finished on Monday, after the exam. Now he still needed to make a laboratory, the dueling chamber and the workout room. The first thing he did was enlarging the rooms. After that he changed the floor. Or tried to.

Lightly cursing he went into the trunk through the portal in the library and collected some much needed matter samples from the storeroom, where he had put them some time back. Harry was now very thankful that he had thought to duplicate some of the matter that made up the floor in the school lab. Then he went back into the basement of his home and began with the transformations.

Before he could start with the interior however, a thought hit him. He knew perfectly well that despite everything he would do correctly, he would also take to experimenting. He needed wards around the lab to protect the rest of the house and the room itself from explosions, corrosive liquids or gases and the like. The same could be said for the dueling chamber, only here he needed protection against stray hexes and the destructive force of some of the curses. And he hadn't even started to read his books on wards, so he had absolutely no knowledge of how to even begin this task.

Harry cursed again. Now he really had a problem. He didn't want to fill his brain to the brim with some magic right before his History OWL – or any other at that. Resigning himself to only finishing the workout-room, he worked on that. The only thing missing now was the equipment. The floor was nice and soft, but still firm. He had even added an area where he could do some gymnastics or a bit of martial art training. It would be needed for his weapon lessons.

After Harry was done with the work as far as he could go, he decided to leave the basement be for time being and concentrate on revising everything he had learned yesterday. Then he could maybe learn a bit more on history and get a start on magical theory. That should even help him with the wards when he got around to it. But it irked him that he could finish the remodeling of the basement. He would have really like to not have to think about it again.

'Oh well. I can't do anything about that right now. But there is still the living room of my trunk to fix up. I'll do that immediately, then at least that is finished. The lab and bedroom in my trunk will be fixed when I go back for my three day potions trip. And I could maybe duplicate the Jacuzzi and fix the master bathroom to my likings. But that'll have to wait until I really need a break from all that studying. It seems, I would do almost anything to get away from history.'

As Harry looked around the livingroom of his trunk, he decided to make the sofas and armchairs squashy, comfortable and in homey

colors. But the first thing he did was leafing through his book for the correct charms to put a fireplace in – without having smoke all over the room or having something catch fire.

He was very satisfied with result. His fireplace was made out of polished granite and each slab was charmed for protection. The fire couldn't leave the fireplace and on the mantle was enough room to literally stick a few mementos without it seeming crowded. On the roof of the fireplace he had placed a few charms to make sure that he had the effect of a chimney, so that the air and smoke would be sucked upwards slightly and a vanishing charm that only affected the smoke and the ash that might come along with the smoke. The armchairs and sofa were crème colored as to fit in with the already existing color scheme. And he didn't want the den to look dark and dreary or formal for that matter.

Then Harry relocated to the library of the trunk to become once again really studious. He was quite thankful, that after the History exam he would have some time to stretch the theoretical subjects alongside the more practical ones. History really was a bitch if you had too much of it.

It was early in the afternoon when Harry had stopped his studies and made himself something to eat. He stood in the kitchen of number 4 and listened to the music he had put on. He had wanted something unique to fit his mood and he got it. The sounds of Apocalyptica roared through the house, the hard beat behind the cellos and the occasional songs was just the right thing to get his thoughts off of everything unpleasant. The kitchen window was wide open, but had had a one-sided silencing charm applied. He was making something a bit more complicated today, different types of pasta with salmon and white sauce.

As he looked outside he could see the Order member under their invisibility cloak walk down the street a bit and apparate away. With a raised eyebrow he looked on. No other guard came and he deducted

that whoever it was, was late. It was a bit irresponsible to leave him here without a guard, though. Just at that moment he could see four shadows swooping down from the sky, were they had circled, and in through the open window. He dived to the floor as to avoid being hit by one of the owls, then made a mad scramble into the den to lower the volume of the music.

When he came back into the kitchen he was treated to the sight of four owls sitting on the kitchen table nibbling on the raw salmon that he had been about to use in his meal. He glowered. Then glowered some more. The owls simply ignored him. Harry sneered, then began to get some vegetables from the fridge for his meal, all the while grumbling about bloody insatiable owls who hadn't the decency to leave his meal to him. He didn't snack on their owl treats either, so couldn't they return the favor?

It didn't take long before the owls decided that they didn't like being ignored. After Harry didn't react to their screeches, Hedwig flew up to his shoulder and bit him in the ear. Hard. His scream would have been heard three roads down if the silencing charm hadn't been up.

Rubbing his tender ear, Harry sat down on one of the chairs and relieved the owls of their burdens. The black ministry owl hadn't come back yet. So he was a bit surprised that he had four visitors and not three. He was even more surprised, when suddenly Fawkes burst into the kitchen in a bout of fire with a message from Dumbledore. Frowning he took the message and opened it. The more he read the angrier he became. It was only Fawkes soothing song that enabled him to keep his magic and temper under control.

Dear Harry,

I hope you aren't too angry with me any more. I really only did what I thought was right for you. You deserve a childhood as much as

anyone. I wanted you to have a normal childhood away from all the fame, hardship and danger. I sincerely hope you can forgive the mistakes of an old man. The reason I am writing to you is however not a happy one.

It has come to my attention that you have written letters to your friends. As Hermione informed me she was visited by Hedwig at HQ where she is staying for protection. Harry, I am truly sorry about this, but you can't write your friends again. While the Burrow and the HQ are safe at the moment, you are endangering your friends more with every letter you send. Your owl is simply much too noticeable and well known. She would lead any interested dark wizard directly towards your friends and I am sure you do not want anything to happen to them.

It would also be just as easy to follow her back to you and the possibility of that happening is a risk that I can't take. If a dark wizard noticed your owl or that of your friend Ron and sent another owl after one of them with curse-mail or even caught one of them to change the mail you could easily be killed. I have already told your friends that they will not be able to write you another letter this summer. As this letter reaches you I will put up another ward around your home as to prevent all owls that have not been to your home before from finding you there. All mail will be redirected to Hogwarts, so you will get it come September. Also, while Hedwig will be able to fly and hunt inside the wards, she will not be able to leave them, just as your friends owls will not be able to enter..

If an emergency should occur, just call for Fawkes and he will bring your message to me. Once again, I am very to have to do this, but it is necessary for your safety.

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster of Hogwarts

Harry was shaking with anger and his magic was crackling along his skin and clothes. How dare that senile, old coot! It was not his decision if Harry wanted to write to his friends or not. He could have always used a new nondescript owl. Or given the letters to his guards to deliver. After all, they held regular meetings, so how difficult could it be pass them on? To forbid his friends from writing him altogether! Just when common sense dictated that he needed them even more than normal. And Hermione! Just how likely was it that the Headmaster had been at HQ and she had mentioned Hedwig's visit as an afterthought? Not bloody likely! He would have to wait until he had read her letter, but he could swear that she was the reason for this newest problem.

The problem with his friends owls was really non-existent. As they were sitting here right now, they would find him again despite the wards. The fact that Hedwig was not able to leave the wards was more of a problem. Now he couldn't even use her for owl-order! She had her notice-me-not charm, nobody would be able to find her, even if they searched for her. The biggest problem was however that all his mail would be redirected to Hogwarts as the owls couldn't get through to him, to be searched and maybe even answered by Dumbledore. His friends owls might be able to find him, but the letters would still go straight to the castle courtesy of the thrice damned wards. He didn't even know if the other three owls would be able to leave the wards again.

Now he had two possible ways around this. He could either try and change the wards some, after he read those books. Which was not such a terribly good idea because he was reasonably sure that the old man monitored them closely and was alerted to every little change that was made to the wards by someone else. The other possibility was to simply get around it. He had after all that very useful directory of magical villages and floo points. It should be possible to get himself a PO-box at an owl-office and redirect all the important mail to the box. Sure, he would have to go and collect it

himself, but at least he would be able to communicate somewhat. Without the much too big nose of the Headmaster sticking itself where it didn't belong. Thankfully, he had an undetected way out of the wards.

Harry didn't even consider protesting against the unfairness of it all. He knew that he would just get a benign smile and a pat on the head and nothing would change. The Order wouldn't be of any use either. They would jump off a cliff if Dumbledore told them to. Hermione and Ron? They had followed the order last year and would likely do so this year, too. And Hermione would probably go running straight to Dumbledore if he sent her another letter – or Ron and Ginny for that matter.

Now, Neville, Luna and the twins were another matter altogether. Nobody knew that he had written the slightly clumsy boy and the dreamy girl. If he wrote them to never mention his letters, they would do just that. And the twins could find out if Ron followed Dumbledore's order like a good little boy or if he tried to get a letter through and be a good friend. The same with Ginny.

However, Harry swore to bring this to the attention of the ministry and the goblins. It would find itself a nice place in the lawsuit. Dumbledore would not get away with the treatment he gave Harry. He must have violated more than just a few laws in Harry's case and he would bet that it wasn't the only time.

At the moment he wanted nothing more than to go and get that box right away, but knew that it wasn't possible. While his future selves would remain in Privet Drive alright, he had sworn to only use the repetition of a day to leave the wards. He wanted to be able and avoid as much problems as possible and the easiest way to do that was to know about them before they even occurred.

For now it would be enough to find out exactly what his friends had replied and just how the hell the old coot had known. Even more

interesting would be just what went on in that senile mind to cut him off completely. He had already told the Order members not to talk to him. And it simply didn't make sense. If there was a safe way to communicate available, just why would the old coot want to forbid all communication?

As Harry reached for Hermione's letter he heard a squelching sound and some sort of clicking behind him. Then he remembered that he still had his lunch on the stove. He turned around and was treated to the sight of Fawkes munching away on some celery. The sunflower seeds that he had wanted to roast after his salmon had been food-napped were already gone, like the carrots and the sweet pepper pieces he'd had already cut. Only the onion remained. Heaving a sigh he decided to just have some pasta with sauce and cheese later on. Then he turned the stove off. He sent the phoenix a suffering look and Fawkes took to the air and settled down on the back of Harry's chair, rubbing his head against Harry's cheek.

Dear Harry,

I just got your letter and yes, I have ranted already. I'm sorry that I can't write more, but I'm really busy. I got a really interesting book that I want to read soon. Harry, you don't need to pretend about your mood and Sirius' death, if you want peace and quite just say so. By the way, you didn't have to be so rude in your letter, I'm quite alright. I'm staying at you-know-where for my safety, alongside my parents.

Harry you need to send Professor Dumbledore a letter when you get a dream. Stay put, you know they are probably false, but stay on the safe side and send a letter anyway. You know, you're always so irresponsible, so please, for once, think before you act. After all, I'm not there to do it for you or to intervene if you go of like usual.

Do you know how dangerous it is for you to owl us? You seem to have a serious death wish. I can't tell you anything about the

you-know-what, just like last year. Take care, Harry.

Love, Hermione

Hey mate,

I just got your letter when suddenly Professor Dumbledore and Hermione burst into my room. I'm at home right now 'cause they put up all kinds of wards around the Burrow. It was weird, they asked me where Hedwig was, they wanted to take her to Hogwarts. Seems Hermione got it into her head that it would be too dangerous for you to write to us, 'cause Hedwig is such a unusual owl and she said something about you wanting peace, quiet and distance. She showed me your letter, it wasn't that different from earlier summers. I think she's finally gone 'round the bend. You wouldn't have written if you hadn't wanted someone to write back.

Hedwig was sitting just in front of them, but they kept looking 'round and they didn't see her at all. It was weird. What ever you did, I think it's brilliant. I didn't tell them, said she'd already flown back. They told me not to write you and that no owl would get through the wards around your relatives house as soon as Hedwig came home. Seems they thought it was better if she was with you than somewhere out there. Crazy, both of them, I tell you.

I took the last letter and gave it to Ginny. They told her the same as me and she just nodded. I'm a bit surprised and really disappointed in her. I'd thought she would at least protest somewhat on your behalf if not on her own. But maybe she was just playing it safe. I told Hedwig to really stretch her wings on her way back. Somehow I get the feeling that it will not be the only thing she'll be doing before she gets back to you. I'd keep her to prevent the wards from going up, but I overheard them talk to Mum about how they would go up in two days either way.

Last summer was bad enough, they always looked over my shoulders as I wrote. It was impossible to do anything about it and I couldn't even apologize afterwards. You know, after the cup I swore that I would stand by you, come hell and high water. Hell we've already seen, the high water is coming as we speak I'd guess.

The twins got themselves inducted and I already talked to them. They'll pass my letters on when they go on guard duty. They were pretty angry about Dumbledore and Hermione. You know that they hate nothing more than tattle-tales and idiotic rules. Mum hasn't made it any better, she's always ranting that they are too young and don't belong in grown-up business or about that store of theirs, which is coming along fine.

The headmaster and Mum put a secrecy charm over Ginny and me, so that we couldn't tell anyone who doesn't already know that we aren't allowed to write you. Thankfully I'd already told the twins and written it down while they were talking to Ginny. There's also something else. It seems that Professor Dumbledore wanted to train me'n'Ginny over the summer alongside Hermione and some others from the DA. Mum told him right off the bat that she would let us, we're 'only' children after all. Barmy, she is.

Hermione accepted, which is why she is at HQ right now. I'm not too sure who knows about that, but they do not want you to know. They are to be your 'bodyguards', to make sure you don't get into more trouble. Idiots, the lot of them. I probably would have accepted, if only to know what they are up to. It seems, we're back to a duo, just like before the incident in first year. You know that I 'like' liked Hermione, but lately I don't know what I ever saw in her. She's gotten even worse than Percy. Now, that's another sore subject. He still hasn't come back or apologized. On the other hand, I've done some deep thinking. Unlike me, I know, but after the DoM... I think I'm growing up at last. Maybe Percy is right, you know, not about you or the Ministry, but about the Professor. The longer I think about it, the more doubts I get.

I'll write more in my next letter, Hedwig is getting impatient and it'll be safer. This has to be the longest and most insightful letter I've ever written. I really hope that what you wrote is true and the Dursley's are cutting you some slack. By the way, yes, I'm fine and sorry about the rant.

Hope to C U soon, Ron

Harry angrily clenched his fists. They had wanted to take Hedwig from him, the only one who truly knew him? The one that had shared all the good and bad with him since he had come to the wizarding world. How dare they! He had trusted Hermione and what did she do? Ran straight to the old loon as if he done something wrong. He wouldn't be surprised if she had snitched on him before. Her books and the big authority figures couldn't be wrong after all. She had changed and for the worse.

Her letter was the last straw. What had he ever done to her? Oh, she would get a reply, per Howler. After she gotten all the cursed mail in fourth year, he had done a bit of research. The last term he had charmed several pieces of parchment accordingly and put an extra charm on them that made them simply appear before the recipient so he didn't have use owls and scare the poor birds half to death. No active magic on his part, absolutely perfect for telling her just what he thought of her. And to let the Order know of Dumbledores games. Not that it would matter much.

Ron's letter however had been a real surprise. He was glad that he still had a best mate, who was finally growing up a bit. He also seemed to have acquired some of the cool logic that normally was Hermione's department. It was ingenious of him to get the twins involved on his own, even if Harry would have done so anyway. He had obviously also grown a bit suspicious of Dumbledore and his

actions and motives. All for the better in Harry's opinion. The mention of Percy without an added curse was interesting as well. If he played it well, he would have some co-conspirators real soon. Of course, he wouldn't spill his secrets so easily. They would have to work for them, if he even decided to tell them before school began again in September.

Harry sighed. He really wasn't in the mood to read any of the other letters, but he knew that there could very well be some useful information in them. And Luna's letter was bound to lift his spirits. He told the owls to find themselves some perches, as it would undoubtedly take some time until they could leave. He probably would have to personally bring them through the wards, one at a time. But he wouldn't do that before he had at least examined the wards some. Then he closed the window.

Hey Harry,

I was a bit surprised to get a letter from you and brought by a strange owl no less! He really looks intimidating. But he warmed up to me after I brought him something to eat and drink. Where ever did you find that bird?

To answer your questions, I'm quite well. Though Gram was angry with me at first, she was really proud after I told her of all that happened. You know, I'm happy that you think of me as a friend, even before this year and the DoM. As to Umbridge, well there were many of us who wanted to go head to head with her, but were too frightened. You did the venting for all of us, even if that wasn't quite fair on you. It was the least I could do.

Gram really wanted to get fathers wand repaired for my continued usage and I tried without success to get the idea out of her head. So your letter was a real live saver. I hadn't thought about the fact that someone else's wand, even that of my father, wouldn't be fully compatible with me and hinder me more than help. I told her that and

what you suggested and voila – I got my very own wand. It's black birch with the heartstring of a Peruvian Vipertooth.

When I told Mr. Ollivander that you had given me the arguments to finally get my own wand he looked at me really weird. Asked me if we were good friends. After your letter I could answer that with a heartfelt yes. Then he told me that he could customize my wand for me and I accepted. It was awesome. I got some holly wood that had been soaked in phoenix tears and some willingly given unicorn blood. Good for healing and working with plants. I have never felt my magic react so forcefully. I have never felt better!

The headmaster was here and asked if Hedwig had come by. I got that really weird feeling that he read my mind as I answered. I was really glad that I could answer no, he had a weird glint in his eyes. He also asked me if I wanted to get some additional training over the summer, to play 'bodyguard' for you. It didn't sit well when he told me that you wouldn't receive any training. I mean, you're the one who needs it the most!

I told him that I had to ask Gram and then told her that I did not want to go. She didn't understand at first, she thought it would do me a world of good, but I explained why I didn't want to. She was even more proud of me afterwards. So, I'm not going. After I told Gram of that feeling she got really angry. She told me that he had read my mind alright. I still can believe that he would do something like that, it could get him a lifetime in Azkaban or more, especially if done on underage people.

So, now Gram's told me to be careful and suspicious of the Headmaster and she's teaching me Occlumency, the art of shielding ones mind. Seems she was weary of him since what happened to my parents.

I also understand what you meant about Ron and Hermione. They can't understand, but I too think that it is for the better. Oh, have you

heard about the goblins? They invented a new means of transferring money to make it easier on us to get to our money. Well, they said they had really only used an already existing concept and adapted it. Gram was a bit skeptical at first, but then she was tickled. Now she won't have to endure that cart ride to the vault anymore!

I hope to hear from you soon, Harry. It would be great to have someone to 'talk' to over the holidays.

Bye, Neville

Hello Harold,

I received your delightful letter. That owl you sent is wonderful, so polite! Did you know he had some Echarins flattering around him? They are little animals, very much like fairies. I took some pictures, I'll send copies to you when they are developed.

I'm very well, thank you for asking. My father was delighted about the things I could confirm for him about the Department of Mysteries. He wants me to tell you 'thank you' for the chance to see all these things, and I have to second that sentiment.

On another note, I am sure you know about the Bumblebee's offer to train a part of the DA. It seems that really rude and bossy girl gave him the list. I wonder why her curses did not work on her? I accepted the offer - after he told me that neither Ronald, Ginevra or Neville are allowed to go by their guardians. I will send you word of the things we will be taught.

Regretfully I will have to give up on the usual holiday search for crumple horned Snorkaks. It would have been a far more interesting way to spend my holidays. Hopefully I will at least find some Riols at the place we will be training. I'll send you copies of the pictures if I

do. That really is the only good thing about it.

I will hear from you soon, Harold, otherwise I'll send some of the Echarins after you and they can be quite vicious.

'Loony' Luna Lovegood

Harry was in stitches after he had read Luna's letter. And now he finally had an answer as to why she had been sorted into Ravenclaw, though right now he thought that Slytherin would have been the better choice. Riolans indeed. He didn't have the foggiest what she was talking about – as usual. But now he had a spy in what was to be Dumbledore's Army. He knew that he could trust her with his life, sanity and secrets, unlike Hermione.

Then he took a look at Fawkes, who was still perched on the back of the chair that he sat on.

"Say, Fawkes, are you planning on staying?"

The only answer he got was a beautiful trill.

"On Dumbledores orders?"

This time the beautiful bird shook his head. Harry was baffled.

"So, you just decide to stay because you want to? Won't he miss you?"

Another head shake. Harry scratched the back of his neck. That was quite unexpected.

"Well, your welcome to stay, as long as you don't go and snitch on me. I'll make you a perch. Do you need an ash tray?"

As he got a positive – and possibly gleeful – trill, Harry stood up and went upstairs. He had a bit of transfiguration ahead of him. At the same time he wasn't quite sure just where his common sense had gone. He had just allowed the Headmaster's familiar to stay with him when he was in all actuality trying to evade and outwit said old coot. It simply boggled the mind.

The last letter lay forgotten on the kitchen table.